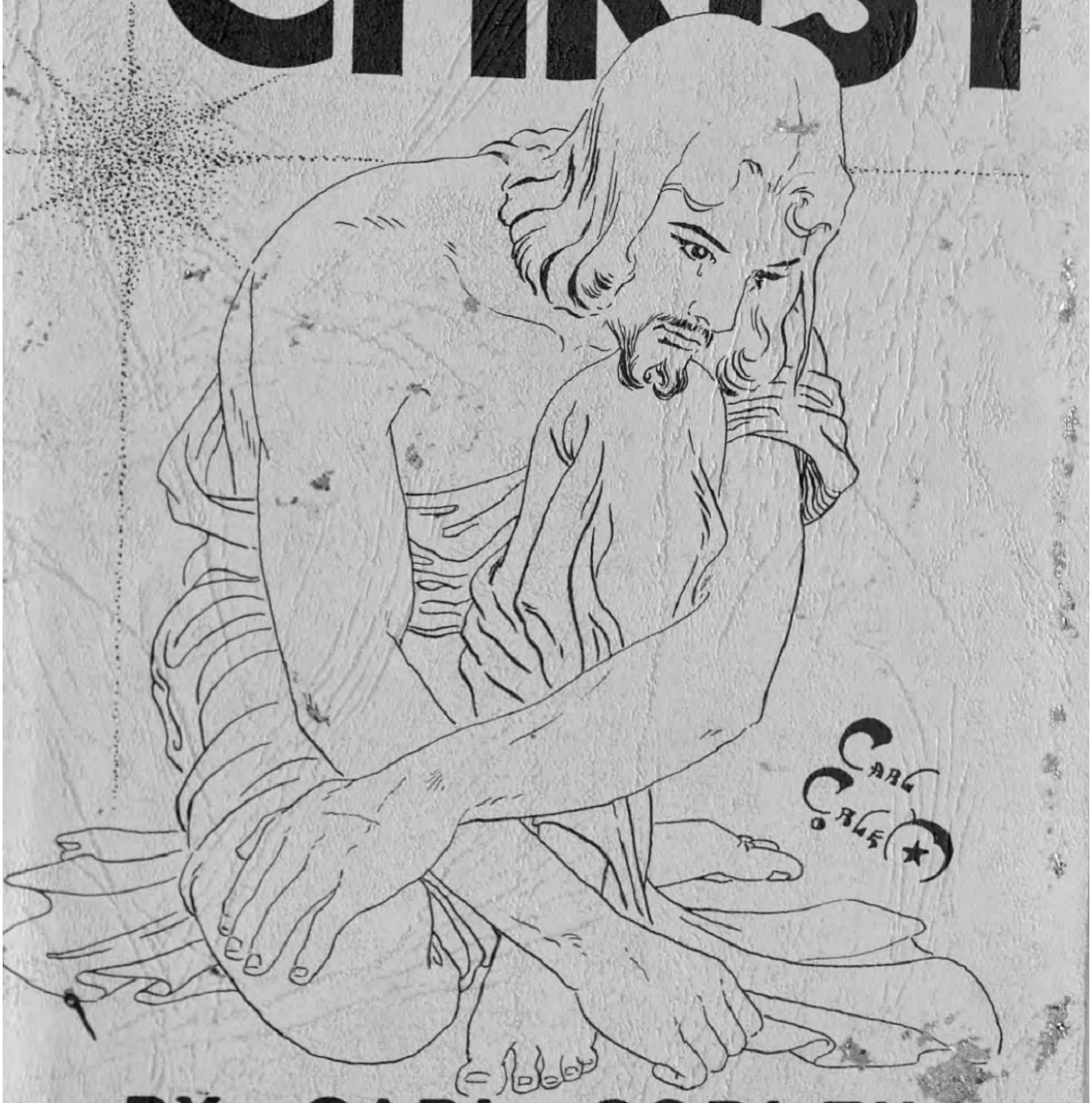
THE AGONY OF CHRIST



BY CARL CORLEY

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If this little book helps one person to better understand the last hours of Jesus Christ, then it has been well worth the writing.....

.....Carl V. Corley

Dedicated to....

my Mother,

who gave me my first bible.

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By
Carl V. Corley

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The beginning of wisdom is the realization that there are other points of view than my own.

Understanding those views is the next step.

The final test of wisdom is understanding why those views are held.

.....The Author

Foreword----------

The day Jesus Christ died was a long day, a very long day. There is much to remember about it. And some have remembered it this way, and some have remembered it that way. Much of what happened was carried out in secret...especially by the Jews who earnestly tried to follow Jesus.

We may wonder why Jesus did not alight in Rome or in Athens or in Egypt to preach his new covenant instead of in Jerusalem until we read in the scriptures and truly get to the core of why he came to Earth at all. He came here to die. And he died. He came here to preach. And he preached. He did not die particularly for the Jews. Or for the Gentiles. He died for man. For all mankind.

The reason he choose Palestine to lay the foundations of his new covenant was because he and his father were dissatisfied with the old and, since the father had never made a covenant with the Romans or the Greeks or the Egyptians but had, through Moses, with the Jews, it would have to be negotiated with that same people. The leaders of Judea had over the long centuries perverted the covenant until worship itself had become a matter of externals, and all inner love was missing.

This is why Jesus had to die in Palestine, in the Holy City, for it was the city of his father. Jerusalem was the father's home on Earth, his only home on Earth. And the temple erected there in his honor was the most elaborate of its kind, and there was nothing in all the world like it. Behind the veil flanking the altar, and for hundreds of years, lay the stone tablets on which God himself

wrote the ten commandants and gave them to Moses. Though the tablets were later stolen, the temple remained the house of God, and the tablets were replaced by the torah handed down from Abraham.

Jesus was not a Christian, as we know a christian today. He upheld no church. All that came later, when his followers picked up the cue after his death and formed the new church. The teachings of Jesus can be summed up in eight simple words: love one another as I have loved you. He preached love and nothing else.

Directly after Jesus' death the grief among his followers became a poignant thing, a volatile fuel which, in its own fierce flame, burned itself out quickly. To them, his death was a tragic defeat.

It has been that to many, since Christianity has been a continual scene of bloodshed, suffering, and persecution. It has brought not peace, but a sword to the world.

I am no scholar. I am no astronomer. I am no historian. I know little if nothing about the mechanics of religion. But I can read. I can probe. I can search out, and these things I have done, and extensively. If I am wrong about any of my declarations, my precious bits of proof picked up here and there, my fragrents of facts, then let my reader come forward and give me a better explanation. I welcome him with an open mind.

I know I will be called sacriligious for putting my findings so bluntly. But in truth I am not. Nor do I wish to offend the most delicate of religious sensibilities. But I do believe that a great deal of what has been called miracles in the scriptures of organized religions is open to rational and physical explanation. If the reader

wishes to feel that I weaken the cause of religion, I would only ask what greater miracle he can cite than physical life and intelligence:

Before we enter upon the tranquility of the bible, let us pause and try to remember that the bible is filled with events which are commonly called miracles. They are called miracles because no one has ever explained them. Countless thousands of Theologians have made attempts at explaining them, but have satisfied few others than themselves.

Above all else, remember that nothing is supernatural, for nothing that exists can be outside nature, and this includes God-- ---who is nature!

I think man's trouble in the past in trying to explain the miracles of the bible is that he has been trying to explain paranormal miracles by means of non-existent causes.

Our bible arrived at its essentially permanent form around the fourth or fifth century A. D. Actually, around a hundred years after the death of Christ. Of course we must assume there were many errors, both in translation and in the transcriptions themselves after being handed down to its authors by Jesus Christ. There were language barriers. Memory often as not clouded the discriptions, which at most are vague, obscure, methoporic. The whole work of the bible is in countless numbers, or symbols. Word pictures so to speak, similar in fact to the picture language of the Egyptians. The bible within itself is a language which must be learned, and men for ages untold have tried to pull from its symbolic pictures meanings which suit themselves.

When the bible was turned over to the church the church failed us in its own field because, in short, it failed to find, to organize, and interpret for us universal knowledge. When the bible was turned over to Science it failed us also, for it ignored the materials developed by the church while, in the meantime, it has battled its way up the blind alleys of the decimal system. Both have failed to give man what he so desperately needs and desires-----a knowledge and understanding of the whole universe of his external environment.

We must learn to take the bible literally, word for word, to mean exactly what it says.

If we venture to say that nothing is purely physical, then we must also say that nothing is purely psychic. Many consider the bible as almost entirely an instrument of mysticism, of the occult, or of divinity---whatever they mean by those terms. But this is not the case at all. The bible is a physical record as well as a divine revelation. And it seems that the time has come when we must abandon some of our so called urbanity and make at least a partial retreat in the direction of the fundamental. If we can remove the fog of mysticism which has all but engulfed the good book, we will find ourselves surprised by the reality which lies beneath.

Just remember, the bible was not written by Christ, nor was it compiled in his lifetime. To say that the entirety of the bible was divinely inspired is merely to exhibit wishful speculation. As a literary effort the bible, in places, is almost unreadable. As a historical document, it is incomplete, inaccurate, and irrelevant. As an instrument of moral enforcement, the bible espouses with equal

vain, but with vim, the extremes of sexual conduct, having unbridled debauchery on the one hand and unreasoned and useless continence on the other. Cruelty and savagery are rampant throughout the bible, and vengeance is treated like a virtue.

But the bible is more than this. Much more. It is the nearest thing which we have to an encyclopedia of those written memories which trickled through the time barrier established by the flood. It is the memory of those profound problems which beset mankind in his early days, even as now, and turns a searchlight upon our future, that time which will come for us----which has already been prepared for us.

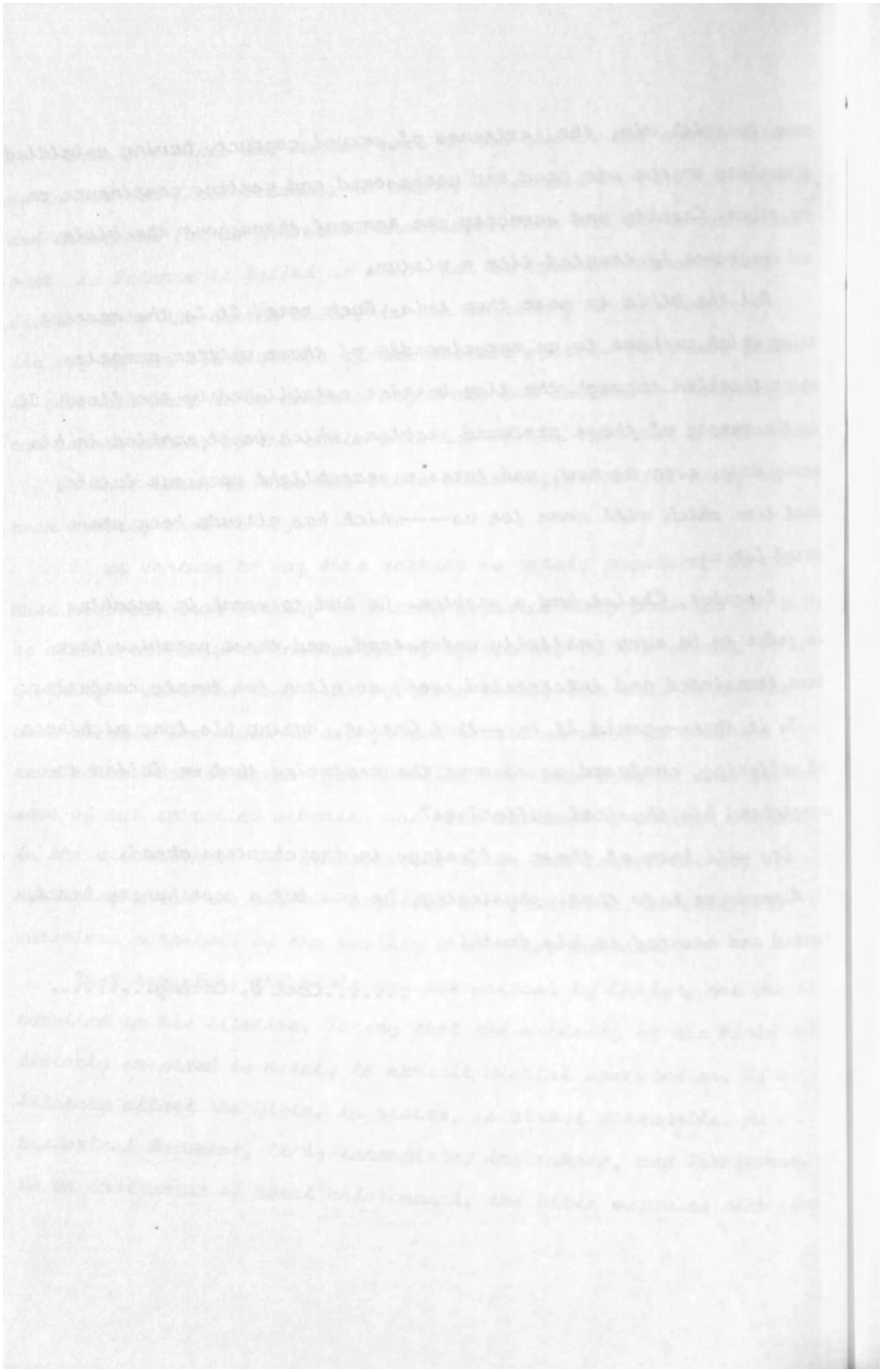
Remember, Christ had a problem. He had to speak in parables in order to be even partially understood, and these parables have been translated and interpreted every so often for twenty centuries.

Is it then---could it be---that Christ, during his long nightmare of suffering, confused us so over the centuries that we failed to comprehend his physical sufferings?

You will know of these sufferings in the chapters ahead.

Already we know that, physically, he was but a poor hungry heart, hunted and haunted to his death!

.....Carl V. Corley.....



Christ the Man

I

Many men over the ages have attempted to descredit the bible, and have attempted in vain,mainly because their theories were not grounded enough,nor earthly enough to create and hold substantial logic. What they have claimed as fact is more astounding than the miracles they have tried to denounce. In other words, they have shamefully contridicted themselves and made known their illogical natures at the same time.

Worse still,they,as numerous more,have tried to say that Jesus never existed at all,that he was the product of an invention of the deciples who,needful of a symbol,created him as a ruse to further their purpose into Christiandom.

At best,these optimistic non-believers should have remained quiet,for, had we no bible to enlighten and transcend us with the teachings of Jesus, Roman history tells us that he existed.

" I have nothing against this man who claims he is King of the Jews," writes Pilate the Roman in his military report to Divus Caesar." But his teachings,though harmless,have arroused the Jews into what,I fear, rebellion."

Another Roman has this to write in his diary: "He was anointed like the athletes who are about to enter the stadium."

This is to say,that he not only existed in Roman history but was also admired by them. Having excelled in the human form,the lovers of brute strength and manly power,they saw enough of this perfection in the physical perfection of Christ to take note of it in their recordings. And how best could the Roman's have described him--"like the athletes who are about to enter the stadium." For to the Romans the athletes who fought in the stadiums presented the ultimate in man--the surpeme in physical beauty--to them the true beauty,for they worshipped the form not the spirit.

Thus they saw in beholding Jesus Christ something of that manly perfection they considered divine,and it is to reason that they also envied his physical self and the dominance that physical characteristic held over them. Let us go a step further in assuming that they also desired to like him. The bible tells us that he was "popular with the soldiers."

In other words Jesus was a "man's man," and liked by other men of the same physical characteristic's as he. As today, our modern athletes admire other athletes,and see in one another the ideal facsmile of what they themselves would like to become--as the Romans no doubt,watching Jesus were ambitious to be like him.

Pilate again shows his liking for Christ when twice he repeats: "I will chastise him therefore,and release him." This reveals his intentions to inflict the scourging as a special punishment, but does not tell us that he has done so and,according to St.John it is the Jews themselves who called for Barabbas to be released from prison instead of Christ,thereby forcing Pilate to have inflicted upon Jesus the terrible scourging.

Though Pilate was a coward at heart,and whose furtherst wish was to stir up the Jews,he actually had nothing against Jesus,and wanted to free him. It is certainly factual that he wanted nothing to do with Jesus's death. But prodded by the Jewish high priests--who longed for an earthly king of great wealth,and not the man in rags who claimed to be King of the Jews, he gave the death sentence. This brings us again to the physical perfection of Christ. For Pilate--"washing his hands of the whole affair," was actually clearing himself of the slaughter of someone whose physical presence he greatly admired--hence we get the,"noble Roman."

This seems apparent to me, since all Romans admired great physical strength,and further proves that, in their eyes,Jesus was,physically, a majestic person,stalwart,sinewy,and very much similar in appearance to the athletes of Rome.

For what other reasons could have embodied their admiration for Christ? Certainly not his teachings. The Romans were ruled by law, by military power. As Christ said:" the Romans are conquerors." They indeed were that,and Jesus's words would have bounced off them like arrows from their shields. But his physical self may have left an impression where his voice had failed. That part of Christ was something which the Romans could understand,and understanding,fortunately for us who love Christ,they record this admirable understanding in the books of their history.

Once again Pilate's proof of his affection for Jesus. Also proof of Jesus' existence. For this alone changed the course of history.

In Jerusalem Pilate alone possessed the power of life and death, which was in turn bitterly grudged by the Jews,and especially the high priests of the Sanhedrin who longed to Turn Pilate against Christ. Failing to produce hatred before this Roman official,they started by accusing Jesus of encouraging the people to revolt. But this accusation brought nothing to Pilate's mind. Then the Jews declared that Jesus had made himself the son of God and that this, according to their law,entailed the supreme penalty of death. But this failed to move the Roman,Pilate. Pilate was a superstitious soul,and a pagan. And to a pagan the son of a God is a hero. So it is clear that Pilate did all that he could do to release this man whose innocence was obvious and who called forth his greatest admiration and respect.

But the jealous Jews would not quit.

They shouted to Pilate: "If you release this man,then you are no friend to Caesar."

Naturally,to Pilate,this was a count of indictment--a rebellion against Caesar. What else was he to do but to put Jesus to death?

Under this tyranny of enjustice all his benevolent indulgence for Jesus waned. From then onwards the condemnation was a foregone conclusion. Only this,from anywhere in recorded history or the bible,does it state that Pilate had any resentment and ill humour toward Christ. And this feeling was not volentarily his. The Jews, the chosen people of Christ,goaded him into his final discision.

And it is no wonder,and for this precise reason, that the Romans were especially careful to record the acts of Jesus of Judea in their histories,for they wanted no part in the crime of Jesus's crucifixion, nor to be blamed for that crime during the years to follow.

Therefore, we have proof that Jesus did exist and that,beyond the great and enormous spirit that was him, he was also a man of great physical strength and beauty.

The earliest Christian churches had a tradition that Christ was not a handsome or imposing man. But in later years,churchmen refused to accept this view. They could not believe that a soul so beautiful would not have a body to match. The Lutheran church believed,and still does,that Christ was lame. But this bit of ridiculous information is so unfounded it is not necessary to search out the truth. Christ was the son of God,therefore not only spiritually perfect but also perfect in physical form. Had he been lame he would have defied the principal of purpose for his existence. He was indeed perfection in all things,which included his human form.

We also have vague glimpses of what Christ looked like from two preciously preserved holy relics. One is the shroud of Turin, treasured by the Roman Catholic Church,and believed to be the winding sheet in which Jesus's body was wrapped before he was entombed. Studying the markings on the age encrusted piece of cloth,they conclude that he was around six feet one inch tall,and weighing around one hundred and eighty five pounds. This is hardly ethical,for man in

the days of Christ were small in statue,barely a little more than five feet,and there is no sound reason that Christ should have been an exception. Too,when Christ's body was placed on the winding sheet for entombment he was lying in a prone position,and when one is in this sleeping position the bone structure is relaxed and measures longer in length than when one is standing,the bones compact. Also, the shroud shows plainly a blood smear a distance below the image on the sheeting,which was no doubt added to the image's length,but this smear is the imprint of his right foot which,when thrust up and nailed to the vertical beam of the cross,became sodden with blood along the sole,thereby forming an elongated image--or stain--at the lower base of the winding sheet,and looks,at first glance,like the continuation of Christ's physical frame.

The shroud,arriving at Turin in I578,after making various journeys over that portion of the world now presently lies in a chapel adjoining the cathedral of St.John,where it is shown but rarely. Exposition depends on permission being granted by the house of Savoy, who are not lavish in granting it. The last exposition took place in I898,when the first photograph of it was taken.

It's authenicity has never been disproved,and scholars declare that it utterly impossible to forge such an article,for the blood stains are real blood,and the cloth was definately woven during the time of Christ. It could well be the shroud of our Saviour,and if it is,then it is the most noble relic in the world.

Then there is the veil of Veronica. This relic was brought to the Vatican some time during the I2th century. It remains today in the cathedral of St.Peter in Rome.

The truth of it holds that on the road to Golgotha,bearing the cross, Jesus stumbled three times. According to history,Veronica, a

devout woman of Jerusalem,ran to him and pressed a linen towel to his face on which was left an imprint of his features in blood and sweat. This startling image has been the subject for artist's for generations. Surely,during Christ's time,many artist's must have seen him face to face. Yet,no artist ever painted his portrait. No sculptor ever chiseled his features in stone or cast them in bronz Though his disciples faithfully recorded his words and deeds,not a single line of description of our Lord can be found in the whole of the new testament.

Yet, it takes little reading between the lines in the new testament to deduce that Jesus looked like an ordinary Galilean,distinguished from the Jews of Judea only by his style of hair and apparel.

His neighbors in Nazareth saw him as the son of a carpenter, and not as the son of God. The scriptures suggest nothing extraordinary about his appearance.

Yet, he must have been tanned and hardy from outdoor living, not soft-faced and frail-muscled as so many painters have insisted on painting him. And his clothes could not have been any different than that of the Jews who surrounded his daily life.

Without a moments doubt he wore white balloon type trousers tied at the ankles very much like that of the Arabs,a tunic of similar material,tied also at the wrists,and not the long flowing robes of sky blue and white displayed so theateratically by artists the world over. About his shoulders he probably wore a blanket-type covering,mainly of loose thick weave,dark in color,to ward off the fierce heat of the sun,and to be used as a pallet at night. And on his bare feet the simpliest kind of leather sandals. He wore on his head,completely covering his long hair, a Bedouin Kuffieh of white, also arabic,and held in place by an agal--two black woolen cords wrapped in silver and gold. Beneath his white trousers,and of which

was his only under garment,he wore a "soudoro" round and about his loins. There may have been a girdle type band about his waist,made of a rich tapestry like material,as a means to hold his tunic in place,which is a custom of the Arabs,but no doubt this bit of added color was ruled out by the Jews themselves who forbid the wearing of anything on their bodies which "chafed."

That of all the material which adorned his body we can well be sure was of the simpliest homespun material available. The Jews then and now were of a thrifty breed,and their religion too shunned their wearing rich trappings and jewelry as did the Romans. They were even forbidden to admire such useless tensil from afar. Even to look upon such beguiling finery was for them "sinful."

Some insist that Christ had no identity,no physical feature which could be named,painted,or described.

The most revealing scriptural clue that I can find for this was in the old testament. The prophet Isaiah, in foretelling the coming of the Redeemer, declared: " He hath no form nor comeliness,and when we shall see him,there is no beauty that we should desire him."

Again I find this confusion of his identity in Judas, the betrayer. He had to identify Christ to the soldiers with a kiss, because he could not describe him,nor pick out any distinguishing feature about him that would enable the Roman soldiers to pick him out in the garden of Olives.

Could it be that Jesus,in his great wisdom and compassion, decided to remain ananymous,because he knew that men see with their eyes only what they want to see and that true vision comes within the heart?

Yet--there is a startling document,preserved in the Vatican library in Rome today which purports to describe Jesus as he had appeared in Judea. It is a letter written to the Roman Senate at the

time of Christ by Publius Lentulus,then Roman proconsul in Judea, a predecessor and aldo friend of Pontius Pilate. The letter gives this description of Christ:

" This is a man of noble and well-proportioned statue,with a face full of kindness and firmness,so that the beholders both love him and fear him. His hair is the color of wine,and golden at the root--straight and with luster--but from the level of the ears curlin and glossy,and divided down the center after the fashion of the Nazarenes.

His forehead is even and smooth,his face without blemish and enhanced by a tempered bloom;his countenance ingenuous and kind;his beard is full,of the same color as his hair,and forked in form;his eyes blue and extremely brilliant.

In reproof and rebuke he is formidable; in exhortation and teaching gentle and amiable of tongue. None have seen him to laugh, but many on the contrary to weep. His person is medium,his hands beautiful and straight. In speaking he is deliberate and grave and little given to loquacity;in beauty surpassing most men."

Perhaps this brief,and all too brief letter,written from one Roman soldier to another, is the best and most accurate and only true description we have of the physical image of our saviour.

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The Holy Shroud

Though it is the discretion of those who choose to believe that Jesus of Judea did not exist,or, if he did then he was not the son of God,it is my intention in this book to prove that he did exist. If he is the son of God I cannot prove. Only my own death,and from that death into his promised Heaven,will I actually realize this. I have proved already in the first chapter that he did exist,and, if he is not the son of God as he claimed,then he remains still the most wonderous person ever to walk on earth. And that is enough for me.

He began a cult of only twelve members over two thousand years ago. Today trillions are members of that same religious crusade. That in itself must tell the most skeptic something.

He gave to the world the divine rules of life,whether he is God or man. If we do not live by those rules it does not make him less a man,or less a God. It is up to us.

It has been said that all men could be a Jesus Christ. The only reason they cannot is that of their own weakness to do so. I hardly think so. Whether God or not, Jesus of Judea had something of which he was always master. Even as a man he possessed the insight of thousands of years ahead of his time. He had a preview of the future,which within itself, set him apart from other men. He was deeply concerned for all mankind,even to his death,and if one has taken time to read the scriptures they will find it obvious throughout that he knew,and had always known,that he was to be crucified. Yet--he did not detour from his primary aim,nor did he change his

program of which was his infinite goal. He went straight to the cross. He never faltered.To the very last instant he willed his own death,and to the exact instant it would come.

So whether we believe in God or not,whether we believe that Christ was a God or not,at the moment is not the essential thing. What is essential for us to believe is that here was a man who had thought of us,who was concerned for man,for his well being, for his spirit of the soul. How extraordinary that someone should concern himself for our happiness when we think of this with a clear mind, when all about us our neighbors are anxious to cut our throats, who are plotting vengence and grieveances,who are fret with jealousy for us,who are our constant rivals. Is there one among us today who earnestly puts himself out for us,who worries about our success, our happiness? I doubt it. So the least we can do in return for this brilliant man,if he is a God or no, is to aknowledge him and show a remnant of respect in that he died attempting to save us.

So now that we know that Jesus did exist--as a man--if we must declare it as that, it is my further duty in this lexicon to bring together toward the last,one by one the articles which were intimitely associated with him,to describe each with nothing but the most absolute accuracy as far as my research has taken me, and to finish in correlating them where they were best suited-- and the most climaxing scene of all--his crucifixion. Here, I hope to bring my reader face to face with the awesome agony of this man during his last hours on earth. We will be there; at the last supper, the mount of olives, in the garden of Gethsemane,during the terrible scourging,at the carrying of the cross,and on Golgotha.

So for the first of these noble articles,let us take the shroud. The shroud,or the "othonia," in which Jesus was laid after his death

and,as I have stated earlier now lies in the chapel of St.John, is a piece of linen 43 inches broad,fourteen and one fourth feet in length,a piece of linen with herring-bone stripes. To weave this would require a loom with four pedals. The woof of this contains 40 threads to two-fifths of an inch. It is a tissue of pure linen, close and opaque,made of coarse thread of which the fibre is unbleached. Such a material most certaintly belongs to the age of Jesus. Similar fabrics have been found at Palmyra and at Doura Europos. One would thus expect to find it among the wares on sale in Jerusalem round about the year 30.

Down the central part of the shroud, once having studied it thoroughly,one can see two impressions made by the body,with two marks made by the head near to each other but not touching. One is the front picture of the body,the other the back one. When one remembers that these blood stained pictures were made by a corpse the explanation is simple. The body would have been laid on its back on half of the length of the linen,which would then have been folded over the head to cover the front,reaching right down to the feet.

The blood stains on this strip of linen are now of a brownish furbished color,and is due to the staining of each thread,which has been more or less impregnated. The whole picture in stains reveals a perfectly proportioned body;it is well made and robust and measures a little over five feet. The face,in spite of the strange effect of all these impressions,is beaufiful and imposing. It is surrounded by two masses of hair,which seem to be rather pushed forward.

The marks of blood,studied in detail, show clearly the wounds of the scourging,of the crowning with thorns,of all the ill-usage that took place,the carrying of the cross,the crucifixion,even of the blow of the lance received after death,which drained the veins of their blood.

To better understand the shroud we must remember that blood remains liquid in a corpse. When blood leaves the veins owing to a wound,if collected in a basin or glass it can be seen coagulating rapidly. It becomes a sort of red jelly,which is called a clot. Coagulation takes place in a very short time,never longer than a few minutes. Secondly, the clot grows smaller,and exudes all its liquid content,the serum. It then gradually dries.

It is these tiny blood clots of which the picture of Jesus is impressed upon the linen shroud. Most of these clots were more or less dry at the time of the burial. But we must remember that a corpse will continue to give out moisture for some time. Each cell for a while continues to live,each one on its own,and they die individually. Total death sets in with putrefaction,and only, when the body is in the process of decaying. Our faith tells us that Jesus never knew corruption; and every part of the shroud confirms us in this certainty. For there is no flow of the blood on the shroud;there are only the counter-markings of clots;these clots represent that part of the blood which has congealed on the skin,while flowing over it.

It is certain now that the body of Christ, in its glorious resurrection, could have left the shroud with the same ease as when he was placed within it,the clots of blood having already congealed,and here is a palpable proof of the resurrection. Had he not arisen,the linen would have stuck to his body,decaying with his bones and flesh.

Many,hearing this, have said that the shroud is a forgery-that it was done by some clever artist.

A clever artist indeed! All artists(and I am one myself) have painted flows of blood for us;but not one of them has thought of painting clots. Too, how could an artist, who was painting a

shroud destined for public exhibition, have dared to do an unheard-of-thing,that of painting Christ who was entirely naked? How could he have thought of painting only one pierced hand and one pierced foot,and with that curious flow across the back--which shows so plainly on the shroud? How could he,while knowing nothing of the physiology of the blood, conceive of clots so true to life and how was he to paint them on linen which had not been specially prepared?

It cannot be done. Photographs have been taken of the shroud, have been blown up five times its natural size,has been studied under microscopes,has been reproduced onto fine negative plates, and nowhere can be seen the strokes of a brush. By reason of this detail a forger would have had the greatest difficulty in imitating blood-stained imprints,even if he used real blood for coloring, and never would he have succeeded in producing those stains with clearly marked edges,to reproduce the shape of the clots as they were found naturally on the skin.

Getting back to whether Christ was naked,one may say that no artist has dared to represent Jesus naked on the cross. To do so would be hateful. Yet the shroud clearly shows that Jesus was naked. This is too authenic to be ignored. It also blocks out the possibility of forgery.

Why has the shroud not been lost?

It is certain that on the day of the resurrection Peter and John found the shroud of Jesus in the tomb and stored it away for safe keeping. Surely to them the shroud, which was the only possession of their beloved Christ and held his own precious blood, held something infinitely dear to them. In spite of the natural repugnance of the Jews, for whom everything which comes in contact with death is unclean,especially a linen cloth stained with blood, it is impossible to believe that they did not preserve with the

greatest care this relic of God made man. We must remember also that Peter and John were in a state of mournful grief,torn by the awesome staging of the crucifixion,the loss of their Christ, and no doubt clung desperately to the blood stained linen which had veiled that sacred form.

One would think that they would have been careful to hide it. This piece of cloth had to be protected from destruction by those who were persecuting the young church. We can well imagine what would have happened to it had it reached the jealous hands of the Jewish high priests. They would have burned it immediately,for here was the absolute proof of Jesus's resurrection into Heaven.

There is still much mystery surrounding this sacred object; but it is certainly sacred as perhaps no other thing is sacred. And assuredly it is certainly not a human work.

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The Cross

It seems that the Greeks, who had a horror of crucifixion, did not practise it. We do not find its entering Hellenic history till the conquests of Alexander,when he borrowed it from the Persians. It was inflicted under the Seleucids,such as Antiochus Epiphanes, In Syria,and in Egypt under the Ptolemies. In Syracuse, which was a Greek town, it had perhaps been borrowed by Denis the Tyrant from the Carthaginians.

The Romans adapted it following the example of Carthage,where it was frequently practised. At Rome they started, during the wars, by crucifying deserters and thieves,but above all conquered rebels.

Yet, nowhere was this last reason resorted so much as in the land of Israel,from the 2,000 seditious Jews who were crucified by the Legate to Syria,Quintilius Varus,after the death of Herod the great, down to the hecatombs of the siege of Jerusalem, when the Romans crucified as many as 500 Jews a day,according to Josephus, a Jewish historian who was, however, not unfavorable to the masters of the world.

In the trials of Spartacus,after its repression, there were 6,000 crosses marking out the road,the whole way from Capua to Rome. Even Roman citizens on occasion were crucified,and this not only by Caius Licinius and Labienus,on whom Cidero heaps bitter reproaches for this reason. These victims were either emancipated slaves or provincials. Sometimes a citizen was crucified.

The cross itself,according to the general rule,was made of two distinct pieces. The one piece which was vertical,and was a permanent fixture,having been stationed upright in the ground

and utilized hundreds of times was called the "stipes crucis," and the other piece,which was movable and was fixed horizontally onto the first(the one Jesus carried to Golgotha) was called the "patibulum."

The vertical shaft,rising like a tree trunk,was usually low. This allowed the wild beasts who were let loose to attack the crucified easily,and also the wolves of the esquiline who devoured the corpses. Also the low crosses,no more than six feet, greatly simplified the work of the executioners,especially when time was pressing and there were a large number of condemmed men.

Artists of all time have protrayed Christ impaled upon a cross that takes the shape of a T ,instead of that of a T,like the capital Tau of the Greek alphabet. Of course that have been in error,for, though during the time of the Roman occupation of Jerusalem,when Jewish high priests were permitted to demand the death sentence of one of their own,but were not permitted to carry out the death sentence(the Jewish sentence for crimes is stoning)it was the Roman who selected the instrument of death--which was the cross--the Roman cross shaped like a T.

It is certain,if one thinks of it from the point of view of the executioners,that the T was far easier for a carpenter to make. It was only necessary to hollow out a mortice in the middle of the cross beam,or(patibulum)and to chisel down the top of the shaft so as forming a tenon. This way,the fixing could be done at arms length.

There were no elaborate crosses in those times. Wood was scarce, there were hundreds of crosses to be made,and the carpenters were not eager to complicate their work by dressing the lumber or by smoothing its edges as displayed in paintings of the one on which Christ was

impaled. Since there were numerous crosses to be readied daily,it is hardly expected that they took any special care or artistry with the one on which Jesus was to be crucified. After all,to both Jew and Roman,the crucifixion of Christ was an ordinary occurance. His crime was simple,that of blasphemy,and he was to be crucified along with two other men,Dysmas and Cestas--a murderer and a thief.

It has been said repeatedly,and has been depicted in paintings often that Christ carried the whole of the cross to the site of execution. He could not have. The crossbeam was made of cypress, about three inches by five inches and around six feet long and weighed about IIO pounds. Both pieces weighed over 220 pounds. How could Jesus,already beaten to the point of death,weak from lack of food and water and the loss of much blood,carried 220 pounds for almost a mile?

He could not have. Nor even could a strong man for that matter. He carried only the crossbeam. Both his hands,as to custom, were tied,with a bout a foot of slack inbetween. The beam was placed on his right shoulder. His hands were brought up and the rope looped up over the beam,so that in case of fatigue of the hands the rope would catch the beam before it could fall to the ground and onto the Roman guard walking directly behind him.

We may add that the imagination of the executioners sometimes varied the regulation method of crucifixion. Occasionally, for example,they changed the standard position,and crucified them head downwards,as was done under Diocletian and in Palestine. Peter was crucified up side down,at his own request, for he,as he said,"was not worthy to be crucified as was Jesus crucified."

But the simpliest,and most used,was by this method. When the entourage reached the execution site,the crossbeam was taken from the shoulders of the condemmed and placed on the ground. The prisoner

was made then to lie down on the ground on his back,his shoulders in the middle of the crossbeam. There was a guard at each elbow. Once begun, the matter was done quickly and efficiently. The executioner wore a leather apron with pockets. He placed two five inch spikes in his teeth and, with hammer in hand, knelt beside the right arm. One soldier held the right arm out flat to the board. The executioner probes the wrist to find that little hollow spot. The nails are never put in the hands,for they will not hold. When he finds it, he takes one of the spikes from his mouth and holds it against the fleshy spot. Then he raises his hammer and brings it down with all his force. The executioner then leaps across the condemmed body of the prisoner and repeats the process on the left hand. The crossbeam,with the prisoner hanging by his pierced wrists,is then lifted up by two or possibly four soldiers. The body of the prisoner is dragged behind until they reach the up-right shaft,the weight of his whole frame on his pierced wrists. The beams is lifted high, centered above the shaft. when the cut mortice is directly above the tenon the soldiers let it drop.The tenon goes up through the mortice or,actually in the reverse,the mortice comes down over the tenon,wedging the cross in shape. We can imagine the pain of the prisoner when this happens.There is a sudden jerk,a falling,then a catching,and the entire weight of his body is strung taut by the bones in his wrists. The feet are lifted up,the right sole fastened flat to the up right beam,with the left foot placed on top of the right and a third spike is driven home. This lifting of both feet has its special torture. The prisoner lives longer,thereby he suffers longer. If the executioner feels that the prisoner is stronger,or more determined to live,he sometimes takes an iron bar and breaks both legs,and the prisoner is then quick to die. The plunging of his body lifts his rib cage,the formations of his arms

squeezing his lungs and his heart. He can breathe in but not out, and death is sure to follow--the death of asphyxia--strangulation.

Once executed and the prisoner is dead the usual course was for the corpses to remain on the cross and to be devoured by birds of prey and by wild beasts. However,under Roman militia,and especially in Jerusalem,the bodies could be asked for by families who wished to give the condemmed a decent burial. Mercifully(and in the case of Jesus) it seems that the law authorized this final grace without hinderance or demand for payment.Even the ashes of those condemmed to the stake were returned to the bereaved,if they were asked for. On the other hand the judge,since it depended on him,could refuse the authorisation in certain cases,and for various reasons,in which a hatred for the condemmed man usually plays its part.

When once a body has been asked for by beloved ones a Roman soldier goes quickly to the site of execution and pierces the body on the cross with a lance,or short javelin. This practice seems to be similar to the revolver shot whichis fired into the ear of a man who has been shot,even when he is already dead.This assures to the executioner that the condemmed one spoken for is actually dead. Sometimes this blow is given quickly,immediately after crucifixion, in order to kill the condemmed man without delay. In Jesus's case, he had not received it during his three hours on the cross,and this explains Pilate's astonishment when he learns that Jesus has died so rapidly.

The last and final customary ritual of a crucifixion was the nailing of the nameplate on the cross. This was usually a small board of wood about a foot and a half long and about a half a foot wide,painted of some light coloring,and on it the name of the prisoner and the perfect of his crime.

There was a leather throng or cord of chain tied end to end on this inscription which was worn about the prisoners neck on the way to the place of crucifixion.

In Jesus' case the sign was in aramaic,reading; "Jeshu han nostri malka dihudaey." or; "King of the Jews."

This short,brief message annoyed the Jewish high priest Caiphas, who condemmed Christ in the first place,for he believed strongly that such a title whould alter the Jewish faith,and turn them away from his temple,and the temple of Annus.,declaring that the temple would become as the tombs of Egypt. This he related to Pilate,once he had been granted an audience.

"Let not the inscription be,King of the Jews," he implored,"but instead: I am the King of the Jews."

At this it is said the Procurator smiled grimly and said,for he hated Caiphas and all Jews:

" My inscription stands."

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The Crown of Thorns

There is not much to say about the crown of thorns,since it was not a thing usually practiced by neither Roman nor Jew in their punishment to the condemmed. The crowning of thorns of Jesus was carried out by a motly crew of Roman soldiers when he was turned over to them by Pilate for scourging,and was manifested from their torturous minds after Christ had said he was King of the Jews--so the crowning--by something--seemed a natural plaything for them. Perhaps,while searching for something to crown him with during their little tableau of pain and mockery the bundle of thorn must have been handly,no doubt there as fuel for heating or cooking.Anyway, some soldier, having spotted it,employed his imagination and formed a crude crown from them.

Artists have formed the habit of surrounding our Lord's head with a neat circular crown made of intertwined thorns. They have interpreted the Gospel texts according to their own ideas,and have had not the slightest concern for archaeology. I bear them no grudge for this for I, on occasion, have been quilty of this.

Actually, the Roman soldiers placed on his head a crown of thorns,but it was,in fact, in the shape of a "pileus," so that it touched and covered his head in every part. The holy shroud tells us that our Lord's head received seventy wounds--a lot of thorns! The "pileus," among the Romans, was a sort of semi-oval head-dress made of felt,which enveloped the head and was especially worn during work. St. Brigit declared later on in her revelations that the crown tore the whole of the head of Jesus.

St. Matthew and St. John clearly insinuates that the crown was a sort of cap made of thorny branches,and not just a head band(as artists have depicted). A quanity of thorns are to be found throughout

the world,said to belong to the crown,and which have been distributed throughout the centuries,so as to satisfy the devotion of the faithful.

The crown of thorns belonged to a thorn-bearing tree common in Judea. It is called the Zizyphus spina Christi,a kind of lote-tree. It was probable that there was a heap of its branches in the praetorium,used for firing by the Roman cohort. Its thorns are long and very sharp. Any doctor can tell you that the scalp bleeds very easily and very vigorously. And as this cap was driven against the head by blows with a stick,the wounds must have caused much loss of blood,and it is without a doubt that the face and head and neck of Jesus was drenched with red.

At the Cathedral of Notre-Dame, in Paris,there is the crown of thorns. Now this crown of thorns has no thorns;it is a circle of plaited rushes and this explains everything. After they had imposed the crown of thorns the soldiers must have fixed it in place with these plaited rushes so that it would stay,winding the soft plaits around and about his face and neck mockingly,laughing all the while, binding the cap of pain forever to his sorrowful head. I imagine it was difficult for Christ to see once this tragic riddle was over, for it is certain the veil of soft rushes partitioned the space before his blood-shot and fist-bruised eyes.

Such a crown would have wounded the whole surface of the cranium and also the forehead. In the image on the shroud it is said that one can see flows of blood the whole way up the head,each one coming down from the wound made by a thorn and following irregular courses. They all stop at a rather concave line fairly high up,which must mark the place where the band of sea-rushes was drawn tightly against the nap of the neck,and then there is another series of large

flows underneath which seems to become lost in the mass of blood clotted hair. It is behind the head that most blood is accumulated. There is nothing surprising in this,since,during the whole time that Jesus was on the cross,that was where the crown would come into contact with the crossbeam each time he drew back his head to take in breath,and the thorns would be driven yet a little further into the scalp.

In front,where the face of the shroud lies on top of the face of Christ the flows of blood are milder,but also easier to discern. Some are coming from the top of the cranium and there is a long trail on each side of the thick masses of hair that frame his face.There are four or five which start from the top of the forehead,moving down toward the face. At the tor of his brows a level of thick blood stops abruptly the width of his skill,like water that stops at a dam. It is then obvious that the band of rushes has been wrapped in numerous levels top of his eyebrows and the blood,running down from the torn pricks along his scalp,have backed up here in coagulation.

There is a swollen mound in the direct front of the face,which tells us that his nose has been broken,administered perhaps by a club during the mockery of the crowning of the King. We all know how the nose bleeds when it is only slightly bumped,so we can imagine that this eternal flow of blood through his broken nostrils have satuated the sea-rushes across his face,and they in turn,after the blood has clogged,have stuck to his skin,and that the over-all of his head, bound up in an oval of thorn branches and sea-rushes and cemented together with his blood has formed a hideous mask.

This image and it alone,should be enough to disgust a physiologist and a surgeon. And to know suddenly that beneath that mass of blood and hemp breathes the beautiful face of our saviour.

It is enough! Please--do not talk of it!

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The Scourging

The term scourging means flogging. Roman scourging was called "the half-way death" because it was to stop this side of death. It was not administered in addition to another punishment. The two thieves who were to die along with Jesus were not scourged. They were sentenced to death on the cross,and that was enough. Jesus was to be scourged as a punishment and no more--ordered by Pilate so that later he could be set free. As I have stated earlier, he wanted nothing to do with the Crucifixion of Jesus.

The Jewish law--Mithah Arikhta--forbade any manner of prolonged death for condemmed criminals,and exempted any who were to die from the shame of being scourged.

The Jews called their scourging the "intermediate death," although it was far less severe than the Roman.The custom in Palestine was to administer to the prisoner forty stripes save one. It was done by a paid executioner,who, armed with a long supple rod,beat the prisoner thirteen times on each shoulder and thirteen times on the loins. The prisoner seldom died,but according to Jewish standards, he was shamed for life.

The scourging of Rome was more deadly. It was administered by a trained man called a lictor,and he used a short circular piece of wood,to which were attached several strips of leather. At the end of each strip was sewed a chunk of bone or a small piece of iron chain. This instrument of torture was called a flagrum.

The prisoner always was striped naked. He was tied to two iron rings attached to a stone pillar about four feet high. This stone pillar was used mostly for a rack for saddles and armour for the soldiers.

The iron rings were centered low on the post,forcing the prisoner to bend over so that his naked back was conviently exposed to the torturer. Mercifully,this protected the areas about his stomach and the vital tender places about his loins,which could be easily wounded internally by the sharp blow of the staff.

On the shroud which enveloped Jesus in the tomb there are plenty of the marks on his body cut by the sharp talus,or ankle bone of sheep stitched into the ends of leather. They are scattered over the whole of his body,from the shoulders to the lower part of his legs. And though most of them are to be seen on the back portion it is obvious that they turned him around to face his torturer,for there are identical markings on his chest and thighs. All those which only caused ecchymosis(a severe bruise) if any,does not show on the shroud,but there are more than a hundred markings made by the flagrum,which means that he received more than sixty strokes above the customary lashes. The markings are oblique on the thorax, horizontal on the loins,and oblique once more on the legs. At this level, one can see in the frontal image long oblique furrows,which must to have been produced by the ends of the throngs. The halter-like wounds are seen all over the pelvic-region.

Finally,there must have been two torturers,for the obliqueness of the marks is not the same on both sides of the body.

Jesus received a double-dose of scourging.

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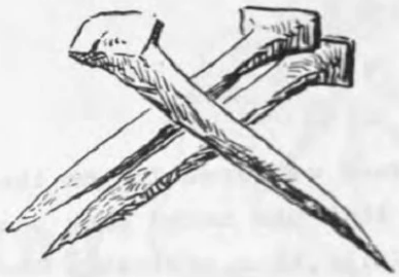
The Spikes



The spikes or"nails" most commonly used during the time of the Roman occupation in Jerusalem were crude staffs of iron 3 inches in thickness,about six inches long,with square bodies and square heads. So we can best assume there were no "special" nails made for the purpose of crucifying criminals and rebels.

Three were used,two for the hands and one for the feet. Crucifixion in the palms of the hands is simply the literal translation into art of David's words: "they have pierced my hands." The artists who have painted Jesus on the cross have not searched further afield; for them the hands means the palms. But to crucify directly into the palms of a human hand is impossible. The flesh tears,and the hands slip past the spike.

For the hands, the spike is placed at the center of the upward portion of the wrist,at the end of the lifeline. There is a tiny hollow there and, as the spike is driven it,a little outside and medial to what is called the Destot's space of the hand,the point of the spike reaches the head of the great bone,slids easily along its mesial slope,goes down into the space and crosses it. The four bones are pushed aside,and the spike continues,down into the transverse carpal ligament of the wrist. If the executioner is experienced in his work he can find,without much difficulty,the tiny soft spot made--as if my nature--for the piercing of a nail!

If he strikes it correctly it draws little if any blood.

At the exact instant the hammer strikes the spike,placing avid pressure on the wrist,the thumb is automatically drawn inward,for the motor nerves of the openens muscles and of the short flexor muscles of the thumb branches at this level off the median nerve.

Christ at that instant must have agonised,and about the cadaverous rigidity was fixed instantly,with the thumbs bent inwards into his palms. And that is why, on the shroud, we see the two hands from behind,which show only four fingers,for the two thumbs are hidden from our view in the palms.

To locate the hole for the crucifixion of the feet we must search out the Lisfranc's lifeline,which seperates the tarsus from the metatarsals,and is marked by an oblique line both outside and behind,the ends of which are situated in the middle of the inner edge and in the middle of the outer edge of the foot. The place for the one spike is immediately in front of the Lisfranc's lifeline. Or,to clearify it more readily,it is in the axis of the space which separates the second and third toes. Here,the spike goes through easily,meeting only the soft parts,while pushing aside the second and third metatarsals. The spike manages to avoid the deep arch of the sole of the foot,which crosses the base of the metatarsals. In any case,with the feet, the haemorrage is not extensive,but is enough,as we notice on the shroud, to cover the bottom of the right foot with blood,the foot placed against the upright of the cross, the left being on top where there is no blood at all.

The evidence of these realistic markings on the shroud,the thumbs bent inward,the blood indicating the placement of the foot, are too genuine to be faked. No forger,however clever,could have thought,or even imagined the minuteness of such accuracy. It is this source of reality that comes only from life.

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The Lance

There is no description of the spear--or lance--which pierced Jesus's heart and, since it was yielded by Abenadar the Centurion who thrust that one and final blow, we can readily assume the lance was Roman. A simple round shaft,of wood,perhaps cypress, with an iron tip,oval in shape and, since the Roman soldier was proud of his trappings and armour,it was perhaps furbished into a glistening silvery shine.

But the lance is not important. For Christ was already dead when the blow was struck.

Yet the blow itself is. The lance was given to the right side reaching the right auricle of the heart,perforating the pericardium. The flow of blood and water from the dead body has always deeply moved exegetists and theologians. And those who believe in the divine have stated: "I know well that neither blood nor water flows from a corpse,but in the case of Jesus it was a miracle."

Indeed! It was no miracle at all!

As regards the water,we shall see what caused this. One is, however, astonished to find the strange idea surviving throughout the ages that blood coagulates in a corpse. Yet,those in charge of sacrifices and auspices,on the other hand,and also butchers, are aware that the greater veins in a body,when opened,produce a flow of blood. It is when the blood strikes the air that it begans to coagulate.

Let us remember that the heart is mesial and in front,resting on the diaphragm,between the two lungs,behind the sterno costal mass,in the anterior mediastinum, and not, as most claim, on the left side of the chest.

Clearly distinguished on the blood stained shroud on the left side to us,but on the right portion of the corpse,there is an oval stain with a main axis going slightly obliquely upwards and outwards,which is distinctly the impression of the wound in the side, from which the blood issued. It is about two inches in length.

Behind the breast bone one can see the cardio-pericardial shadow(the heart) with the shadow of the great blood-vessels rising above(the aorta and the superior vena cava). The right part of the heart extends noticdably beyond the right edge of the breast bone. The heart rests on the hepatodiaphragmatic shadow(the liver). Below the left diaphragm the gaseous sac of the stomach is outlined. (all this can be readily detected on teleradiographs of a corpse) The right convexity of the heart was 8 eentimetres away from the center of the wound. The wound is definitely above the mass of the liver.

The lance must have entered above the sixth rib,perforating the fifth intercostal space and penetrated deeply beyond it.With that it then would have met the pleura and the lung. This might have caused a great deal of blood to flow,but no water. Now the part of the heart which extends to the right of the breast-bone is the right auricle. And this auricle,which is prolonged upwards by the superior vena cava,and downwards by the inferior vena cava is--"in a corpse always filled with liquid blood." And Jesus was quite dead at the time of the blow with the lance. As Gospel will tell us.

The water flowing from Jesus's body was then pericardial fluid. It is plain that after an exceptionally painful death-agony,as was that by Jesus,this hydropericardium would have been particulary abundant,so much of it flowing down Christ's side in fact that John,who was an eye-witness,was able to see both blood and water.

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The Pilgrimage

Let us go now,in our little group,as the last of the pilgrims to trickle into Jerusalem for the Passover observance. We have crossed the breach of time,over a gap of two thousand years,and we huddle closer together as we make our silent way between the mount of Olives and the Mount of Offense. We dare not speak. Indeed, we have nothing to say. We have crossed time to observe. We are eager to see everything in the last day of Christ. And this is his last day on Earth.

It is the year 784 A.U.C. according to the Roman calendar. It is thursday,the evening of April 6,and we must say for now we know --the year 30 A.D.

It is seven o'clock,and dusk is quickly approaching.Darkness always comes soon in the mountains.

The outer walls of Jerusalem,whose thirty feet of height makes a dark shadow down the valley of Cedron,are strung with the tents of pilgrims. Sheep are huddled in small independent groups,their wooly backs like phosphorescent light in the on-coming night. Here and there donkeys,oxen,and camels adorn the front of the tents,where round and about men and women,their cloaks sweeping the soft sand, prepare for the night. Before each tent a small campfire has been lighted,and the hillsides seem strung with flaming jewels.

We enter Jerusalem by way of the fountain gate(Jesus has entered here no less than an hour ago with his twelve followers) and we skirt the rear of the great half-circle theater,past the temple of Caiaphas where once was housed the slabs of stone on

which were written the ten commandments given by God himself to Moses on mount Seni,past the palace of Herod,whose elevated esplanade gives it the appearance of resting on a flat-topped hill,its oil lamps strung along the balconies making golden stars of its own, the white marble columns,gold leafed and fluted,shining in the purple dusk,past the Roman sentries going to and fro along the high solomen porches,and to the house of Mark.

We know that Jesus and his twelve followers will be there,and that this is to be their last meal together.Everything has already been prepared by Jesus beforehand,for he already knows this is to be their last gathering and he has much to relate to them concerning their future without him.

We locate the dwelling,which opens out onto a small enclosed courtyard enshoweded with fig and olive,clay urns and stone benches, and we go cautiously up the narrow side steps which lead up through a dark canopy of grape vine. Scripture has informed us that the last supper was in an upper room,and as we reach the darkened landing our hearts are pounding. This is to be our first glimpse of Jesus Christ.

We pause in muted awe. We stand hyptonized and stare. We strain our ears,listening-------.

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The Last Supper

Seeing this gargantuan room,these crude pillars rising to support an even cruder roof ribbed with massive beams---beams darkened with age and smoke trails from the olive lamps hanging from huge chains and from the massive cooking oven of lime stone I am,though elated,aslo disappointed.

All my life I have studied paintings of this---the last supper of Christ--and I have always marveled at the palace-like grandeur these artists have depicted; with columns of marble,with the familiar elongated dining table draped with immaculate white linen and strung with elaborate ware of glistening silver.

There is none of that here.

The ceiling is so black with the smoke rising from the oven where the lamb,selected for the passover feast,has just been stewed that it looks like a part of the night. Though the tall rickety shutters have been thrown wide to let out some of the smoke and to let in some of the fresh air blowing in from the east,and to give a glimpse of the top of the olive and figs in the open court below and of the moon and stars that now drape the vast purple canvas of the sky,they do little to eliminate the gloomy atmosphere in this room,which,as massive as an upper temple in porportion,lies dark and sinister.

The flooring is made from hand hewn planks of enormous width, and is covered with soft wine colored carpets from Arabia. Along the walls huge,darkly polished pieces of furniture sit like crouching beasts,their black shadows flung up against the paneling as the olive lamps swing nervously from their suspended chains.

There is a touch of gold here and there from the fluttering flames of the lamps, the night wind blowing just enough to make them flare, and this fine layer of gold bathes the top of the oven, the top of the bare table--or three tables positioned in the shape of the U of the Roman alphabet--and on the glistening heads of the "twelve" and that of Jesus who, reclining on a Roman divan at the end of the table which forms the base of the U, so that he can see and address them all, is resplendent in a white robe the bluish hue of mountain snow.

And here my eyes come to rest. My knees shake, and my heart beats against the wall of my rib cage like a live thing imprisoned.

I fill my eyes to the brim and overflowing.

His long auburn hair cascades to his shoulders with a gloss all its own, though the gold of the lamp tips the ends and forms to a degree a crown like that of a golden helmet. His beard, like the hue of his hair, is rather short and forms a fork of two distinct curls. His complexion is dark, like lava, and made darker still by the gloominess of this vastly dark room and the contrasting white of his single garment. But his skin glows with that glow, so radiantly, that only fresh water of the bath can make, and his temple fairly sparkles. His eloquent eyes, as soft as pools of light, wander from one face to the other, and they are dipped in sorrow--almost of grief. They gaze forlornly down the length of the two tables parrell to where he reclines, his left elbow propped upon three enormous Roman pillars, seeing and yet--as if not seeing--or seeing beyond--the crude array of clay plates, of enameled majolicas and pinkish-clay flagons filled to the brims with wine weakened with water, the stewed lamp in an enormous wooden platter bedecked with leaves--and in the

Jewish tradition of the passover with none of its skin cut--the urns of fruit and the small clay bowls set before each plate filled with bitter herbs,later to be dipped in bowls of vinegar,and the flat crust-crowned loaves of unlevelened bread,the bread baked to the likeness of that of Moses bread during the famine of Egypt.

Down the length of the tables,one by one, the bright but sad eyes of Jesus pick out his "twelve". He gives each a long, steady look,an almost hypnotic gaze which seems to register in the deepest recesses of his heart. He looks on them and at them as one condemmed--which he is--and that this is to be the last look upon the faces of those he loves and holds dearest.

To his right reclines John who,next to Mark,is the youngest and reputed to be the one which Jesus is all too fond of. His young head rests against the chest of Jesus,his soft,unshaven face buried in the white hand-woven garment which flows over the broad shoulders of Jesus like the soft wool on a sheeps back.

To the left of Jesus sits Simon called Peter,who is closest in heart to Jesus,and the most devoted,with the exception perhaps of John. Peter's face shows his old age,and his massive body,heaped up in his white garment,seems deft with old pains and torments of a man that grumbles,that talks out of turn and who,with his short sword at his side,looks more like a veteran warrior than a man seeking eternal love and peace.

Next is James,the older brother of John who,I have read that is so devoted to the cause of Jesus that he refuses to bathe,to comb or perfume his hair,and that whose knees are as callous as the knees of a camel. As I see him there I deject quickly any such notion about him. His dark hair is smoothly combed,his robust,almost athletic body shines from the bath--which they had all taken earlier

that morning on the outskirts of Jerusalem, beyond the mountain of offense in a rock lined pool. I have always ahered to the fact that Godliness is cleanliness, and I cannot accept with any fortitude the concept, however accurate, that the twelve of Christ were unclean of body (cleanliness is a strict trait among all Jews, and the ritual of hand and feet washing is a daily practice). So, as I gaze silently on the young James, his face uplifted to the head of the table, I take mental notes of how the sheen of his dark complexion so boldily advertises the cleanliness of both his body and his mind.

Next is Andrew who, as always, is the silent one, never prone to asking questions, and never weakened by the vanity of useless conversation. I know that he will soon die, to be crucified as Jesus, but on an X shaped cross.

Beside him reclines Bartholomew, the most handsome of the twelve, and the best dressed. His long black hair is like the wings of a crow and stands out startingly by contrast with his bright yellow beard. He is the only one of the twelve with decorations on his white garment. Bands of purple and gold outline the neck and sleeves, and follow the hem of his robe.

Next is Philip, small, petite, subject to joke and laughs a great deal, described as the merry one. He is a first cousin to Jesus. His mother, also named Mary, is the sister to the mother of Jesus. It is hardest for him to believe that Jesus is truly the son of God, for he has known him all his life. They had been children together.

Then there is Simon Zelotes, older, later to be killed in Egypt, then Thomas, one of a twin, and once a warrior, then Matthew, a tax collector of Caesar's, a wealthy man actually, who had given up all his holdings to follow Jesus, then young Mark, only seventeen, in whose father's house this meeting is being held, and last Judas Iscariot, the treasurer, who is standing. He takes care of all Jesus's

carrying out this tableau just as Jesus has instructed him before hand. As Jesus pours some of the wine from the flagon into a small silver chalice(the same chalice men will search for hundreds of years later but never find) my heart skips a beat. He is coming to the most solemn triology of the last supper,the offering of his flesh and blood.

The chalice is passed from one on to the next. Each take a sip. They yet do not understand. James is reluctant. He does not partake of drink in any form,but finally he drinks. This is a request of Jesus and he must obey.

When they all had drank the chalice came back round to him. He took it and held it up. His ardent eyes are burning with love. He whispers reverently,and even beforehand I know what he is going to say: " Drink you all of this. For this is my blood of the new testament,which shall be shed for many for the remission of sin. I tell you, I shall not again drink of the produce of the vine till the Kingdom of God is set up."

He calls forth a loaf of bread. He places the palm of one hand above the loaf and glances up. His deeply masculine face is framed in a lance of gold. He breaks the loaf with both hands. The eleven look on silently,almost in awe.

"This," he continues ," is my body,which is about to be given for your sake. Take you and eat. Do this as my memorial."

Mutely they take up the pieces of bread and place it between their lips. They glance at him spasmodically,still in mystery.There is so much they fail to comprehend by his actions and by his words. He talks to them so much now,and there seems about it all a fevor of haste,a finality which to them is deep and personal,and they are automatically saddened by it. He speaks of leaving them,and his voice is like a sharp sword in their hearts.

" Do not let your hearts be troubled," he murmurs,and there is deep constriction in the sound of his voice. " Only a little while longer am I with you. Where I am going you cannot follow. If you have faith in God, have faith in me also. In my father's house are many rooms. I am now about to go for the very purpose of preparing a place for you. And when I am gone and have prepared a plade for you, I will come back and take you home with me. I want you to be where I shall be."

He pauses,his voice ebbing,his head slightly bowed,his solemn face etched with doom. The eleven hovers closer,one leaning against the other,and all but encircle him on all sides. Silently they hang onto his every word, his every gesture,his every breath.

" A new commandment I give you; Love one another,as I love you,so I want you,too,to love one another. By this token all the world must know that you are my disciples--by cherishing love for one another."

Peter, his woe-be-gone heart drowning in the gushing tide of compassion for this holy man,looks up at him with tormented eyes and declares his greatest utterance,a marvel of faith and humility:

"You know all things, Lord. You know that I love you."

Jesus rises,and they follow suit. There is a toast. Outside, within the palace of Herod, musicians are playing,and the sounds drift into the openings where the lattice has been flung back,and the lamps of olives which hang from their long chains are at last still,and the dark shadows they make,and play out along the carpet and dull walls are still too,as if time itself has stopped.

The feast is over.

Jesus,lifting his white robe,goes down the dark steps silently. The eleven follow. There is something final,fatal in the air.

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Garden of Gethsemane

It is after mid-night. The last supper Jesus is to have with his followers has taken place,and he stands now,barefoot,his long white festive robe glowing magically in the light of a waning moon in that little dark cove at the base of the mount of olives. He has come after the feast, with his eleven(for one is missing--Judas, who is now on his way to the high priest to give Jesus over to the hands of the Romans)by way of the lower pool,through the fountain gate near the east wall,then over the little trickling creek of Cedron to the olive presses.

The muck of old oil has thickened the night air,having been crushed in the wooden presses ages ago,and the rancid odor,impregnated with the mellowness of new olives,is sharp upon the early morning atmosphere. It gives to the sprinkling of silver moonlight down over the little patch of fernery trees a body all its own, and the darkly ominous figures hovering around Jesus seem an intricate part of the night--a night suddenly grown sinister by the evil--which we know--is already abroad carrying out destiny.

Toward the east the enormous elevated porch of Solomon is lit with a thousand golden lamps,whose reflections of amber find the fret-work of golden grapes roofing the balustrade,and they gleam through the long dark shadows like tiny live eyes stabbing the night.

Behind the standing Jesus can be seen the gaunt marble of the sepulchers and ossuaries of the little cemetery,like vacant thrones. To his left stand the three mausoleums,one to the memory of Absalom,

their rectangular mounds like miniature castles perched in the blind darkness awaiting life. And beyond, twisting a silvery trail along the base of the mount of olives, lies the road to Jerico.

Jesus has ninety more minutes of freedom, and he is excessively talkative. There is so much he must say to his remaining eleven, and he must say these last important things to the point of redundancy for the sake of emphasis, if for nothing else. He has offered himself to the world and that world, that best part of its culture and to the best understanding of a monotheistic universe has spurned him, so he knows he must prepare his faithful eleven for the life they are to lead when he is no longer with them.

He is posed now under the trees, their leafy, lace-work of branches making fantastic patterns on his dark head, his flowing hair, his long cascading robe, and his throaty voice, though purposely low, is speaking in almost a forceful way, as if commanding of them the task he is laying for them ahead.

Though we cannot understand his words, we can, by the manner which he expresses them, read what pours from his aramaic tongue. We know, for we have read the scriptures, that he is preparing them for the trials they will have to face and endure for his sake. He knows beforehand that he will hang on the cross, and is aware, through this, what his eleven will have to go through because he himself has been condemned. He is telling them to take faith, to pray, not to relent to temptation.

" Love one another as I love you," he is saying, and is saying it again and again a thousand times over to make sure it is firmly planted in their minds. "No one can give greater proof of his love than by laying down his life for his friends. You are my friends."

He is making certain that this often-repeated commandment to

love is taking sound root in their hearts,for he knows that this will sustain them during the tragic hours they are to face ahead, and that it will become a fixation and identification of all Christians throughout the future ages.

He is laying before them the basic fundamentals of his new testament,and they are straining to listen,to understand his every word as their troublesome faces group under the canopy of dark shadowy leaves,revealed by the false light of the moon,their nostrils flaring from the odor of old oil from the huge rotary presses in the stone caves. It is a complex and burdensome thing for these simple men, and we see this in their starving eyes darker still by the night, in the up-lift of their weary heads, in the stoop of their fatigued shoulders. His words upon words of advice bears down upon them like a dredge,and the quick-silver glints we notice in their questioning eyes are searching desperately, maddeningly for some sign,some entrusting message he will give them which will lighten with clearance their knowledge during the times ahead.

They yearn to know everything, now that the time has come when he tells them,and in words so sad, so fierce they tear their way through their stricken hearts,and one by one,like a chorus of lost children,they are muttering: "Teach us how to pray!"

Jesus now walks a step or two apart from their dark group and lifts both hands to the silver trappings of the night. His face, like theirs,though a mask of silver light,is fret with old pains and old doubts. The moment is awesomely on him,and he yet has much to convey to this elementary followers of his.

His deeply throated voice bursts into prayer,and the sound is like a song of the desert. He prays for himself. He prays for the brave men who,now succombed to his every word,kneel in the dusk of the mount of olives,swayed by the lamment of his every tone,his

every plead which,to them, is everything he has hoped to do on earth, the sudden clarity of it all telepathing to them this single purpose of his earthly birth,his growing up, his public ministry,and then to this awesome last-his death!

They see clearly now and understand profoundly that they only and God the father were listening to Jesus,and he is making it plain to them--and for the first time--that the father has chosen them to be his apostles--even including Judas the twelfth man. They were knowing now,and with the flooding of their hearts, all that Jesus was meant to be,and why he had merely glanced at them and said:" follow me."

Jesus is praying now for all mankind in the aeons ahead. The sound of his voice and what he says,so solemnly, goes over our hearts like warm oil--like the warm oil of the olives crushed in the rotary presses and pours down over us to cleanse our sins of their fretful wounds.

" May the love with which you love me dwell in them as I dwell in them myself."

He is finished. His work on earth is over. This is the end to his preaching. He has no more to say. We feel this solemn finality in the silence of the tombs which rise up in the moonlight,in the dark hollow of the caves like opened mouths choking a scream,in the leaves of the olive trees that sprinkle their shadows on the silent bowed heads,on the tilted face of Jesus,like the silvery dust of a world we hope to know in the future,in the little luminous path that leads mutely to Jerico.

His instructions to his apostles is over. It is the end to prophecy. He has publicly audited his accounts to the father. There is nothing for him to do now of any consequence but to wait--to wait for his death he knows is to shortly follow,and knowing this does not save

him from a bit of pain,or even shield him from the horror of the awful things that are to come.

He motions to Peter and to James and to John and,taking silent leave of the others, moves slowly from the caves and to a small moonlit alcove strutted with outcroppings of loose stones and scraggly olive trees.

It is warm here in the little olive garden. The vast wall of the city of Jerusalem keeps out the breezes,and the moist earth here about the stones are the last to feel the sun.

It is about one o'clock in the morning now and Jesus knows his hour has come. He motions for the three to pause,to keep watch near the garden entrance,and he moves through the labryinth of stones to a bare spot where there are few trees. The frail play of moonlight,streaming down through the opening,pick out the features of his face and, as he lifts his eyes we shrink in terror.

It is a face gutted with awesome horror. His dark complexion has paled,almost gray,and sunken with blue. His lips are trembling. they go slack. His eyes are huge,bulging obbs,crazy with a vision no one can see except him. He seems suddenly sodden with unrelentless fatigue,as if he can no longer battle the awesome truth upon him.

Shuddering,as if standing in a raging wind, he sinks to a huge stone,his body falling across it, his knotted palms outstretched, his robe a thousand wrinkles gathering dust. He is filled with pain and sudden horror and appalling mental agony,produced now on his last hour of freedom by his foreknowledge of his physical passion, the knowledge of all the sins of man,and the burden of which he himself must assume for their redemption---our redemption!

Every sinew in his body is shuddering. He is shaking until his loose robe,crumbling into a heap at his feet,billows out like sails in a wind. His fingers,strung taut to the end of his hands,

draw back and forth over his palms, stretch, clinch, stretch again, as if battling unendurable physical pain. He begans to sob, his shoulders bowed inward, trembling convulsively, his dark head sunken between his forearms, his head bobbling piteously. Each sob brings both to his body and to his mental anguish a sudden phenomenon of thrashing agony. Sounds pour from his quiverring lips like the unleashed sounds of a wounded animal.

He is suddenly pelted with beads of sweat. He rocks back and forth, mournful.

Haematidrosis is setting in. There is an intense vasodilatation of the subcutaneous capillaries. The pores of his skin are distending extremely, and are bursting as they come in contact with the millions of sweat glands which are distributed over the whole of his skin. The blood is mingling with the sweat, and this mixture is pearling over the surface of his body. Reaching the night air, these blood pearls are beginning to coagulate. They clot, and as he quivers in sharp pain, they fling themselves to the ground.

He lifts his haggard, blood-sweatened face and stares homeward. His arms outstretched become as rigid as rods. His fingers grow taut, like prongs of steel. Mingled with the sweat and the blood and the illumination of moonlight his face is a hideous mask. And he cries hoarsely:

" Oh, Father, if it is possible, let this cup be spared me," He whimpers, and his body shakes anew. "Not as I will," he then whispers, more solemn, more thoughtful, more resigned to his fate. "but as you will."

Frightfully he stands, groping his body wearily in the crazy light. He is a stupor of fright. He has seen visions of his tortured nail-riddled body impeled on the cross and, coming back to reality, he seeks human solace. His agitation is pronounced. His body is suddenly inhumanly older, bent forward, wearily. His long dark hair is plastered

to his blood drenched-sweat drenched face. His arms hang limp, as if fractured at the shoulder. His eyes,imprisoned in twin purple circles,stare unconsciously at his dark surroundings.

He does not see,so blinding is his pain,so short-circuited is his fatigue,but there is a sudden rumbling in his ears of distant drums,the thud of marching feet.

The moment has come!

Judas has reached the high priest Caiphas. He in turn has signaled out Annas,the old Nasi,and he Pontius Pilate. The roman soldiers are coming!

Jesus,suddenly galvanized into life,terrorized into immediate action by the sound of soldiers moving rapidly through the garden of olives,hurries to John and Peter.

They are asleep,their bodies,one young one old, reclined against a covey of stones.

" How can you be sleeping?" Jesus cries,stricken by their lack of devotion to him." Rouse yourselves and pray,that you may not succumb to temptation."

He is dismayed at the sight of his defenders trying to struggle to their feet.

Jesus suddenly turns to find the little garden filled with people. Thus as he has expected,as we all expect who watch him now,and he stands rigidly awaiting his cue to fill the prophecies .

Before him stands a squad of Roman soldiers,priests and Pharisees and Scribes. Affronting them stands Judas.

Silently he comes up to Jesus,lifts his face and kisses Jesus on the cheek--the all too fatal sigh.

Jesus looks down at Judas silently,and there is deep compassion in his eyes.

"Judas," he whispers. "With a kiss you betray the Son of Man?"

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The Trial

It is 3:A.M.

The four Roman soldiers,led by the Centurion, are now on their way with Jesus,his hands bound behind him, to the temple and to Caiphas,second in charge to the old Nasi, Annas.

The Romans hurry,careful to carry out the explicit orders of Caiphas,and the lanterns they carry on the tall poles swing back and forth as they prod over the rough stones,their amber lights flinging fantastic patterns upon their armor,their naked arms and thighs. Between them, the face of Jesus,bowed,can be seen but momentarily,one moment shining in the lighted play of gold, the next cast into dark shadow.

He is silent. His bowed head indicates a terrible solitude,with his opulent eyes half closed,his chin resting on his chest, his long glossy hair lifting and falling at each turn of his forced,rapid pace. His white garment,flayed with the gold of the lanterns and the blue of the night,flow back over his thighs,his legs,and gather dust as his bare feet carelessly step among the loose stones.

At the sight of the gate leading into the fabulous rise of the Jewish temple his steps flag. He pauses and glances up. One of the soldiers kick him.

The gate is flung open. Additional lamps are lighted. From the elevated steps of the temple come streaming a host of members of the Great Sanhedrin,their eyes glaring orbs in the fused light,their immaculate robes held aloft of the dust,their very beings screaming to catch a glimpse of this man who has arroused so much interest-- and unrest among them.

The one man who might be of assistance to the Jewish people was the high priest. As the interpreter of the law Caiphas had the right to insist that anyone who claimed to be the Messiah be sent to him for examination. Had Caiphas been sincere in his desire to find the true Messiah,he would and should have been the first to fall on his knees before this stalwart figure bound with ropes and flanked by stout Roman soldiers. But Caiphas is not sincere.

Caiphas, as we know already, has but one interest: the continuance in office of Caiphas as high priest,and the maintenance of the temple under its current status, both spiritually and economically. There must be no threat to either of these things. The high priest,as in the olden days, had been chosen for life,and he wanted no Messiah, truthful nor otherwise, to interrupt his present glory.

He is coming down the steps now,slowly,reluctantly,stroking his square-cut beard,and the cold stare in his eyes pronounce in vivid testimony his dislike for Jesus already who is threatening to overthrow him, break him, render his present pawn obsolete. He has planned this moment,and now that Jesus is bound,prisoner of the Roman occupation, he feels triumphant. Complete success is too near at hand for him to fail now,and his fingers tremble oddly,sweat beads his forehead, as he lifts his robes and circles Jesus like a fanatic.

His eyes sparkle like glass. His thin lips curl. His awesome expression tells us he is delighted by what he sees. He studies the worn,ragged garment of Jesus,his face,his long flowing hair,his bare feet pricked by the sharp stones and covered with dust.

This humble "Egyptian Magician" is no Messiah!

Satisfied at what he sees in this bound Jew,eleted with glory over the easiness with which he can condemn him,especially now that he has persuaded the Roman Pilate to have him arrested, Caiphas

turns to the Centurion in charge and orders Jesus to be taken to Annas. He wants him,above all others, to witness the humbleness of this peasant who claims he is the son of God.

The Soldiers jerk on the rope binding Jesus,turn him around crudely,and they return over the steps from which they came,on their way to the house of Annas.

We follow,taking our way over the rough stones in the half-darkness,our eyes glued to the bowed head up front,our hearts now pounding alittle more than usual. And we flinch each time one of the soldiers jerks on the rope,each time one of them lifts a foot to kick Jesus in the shins,each time they shove him forward when they consider his progress too slow.

As we round the corner of the temple we see Caiphas standing on the temple steps talking to a dark haired man. He tosses him a hand-ful of silver.

We gasp. For we know this to be Judas,come to claim his reward.

It is 4: A. M.

Annas sits in a resplendid chair on the open terrace of his private abode. Jesus stands before him,still bound, his head still bowed. Neither speak. The silence is disturbed only by the shufling of the soldiers feet who stand a little away from Jesus,awaiting whatever cue they must, under Annas' orders, follow.

Annas studies Jesus,staring mutely, as if his eyes are paralyized. Time passes,and the two seem somehow to be drawn as if by some spell. Jesus, with his eyes closed, Annas with his wide and crystal clear, his stiff figure poised in his elegant chair, his long glistening robe fashioned over his long bony thighs,sweeping the polished stones of the terrace.

We watch,we wonder what he is thinking.

We can only guess:

He thinks now,no doubt, that: here is this man standing before me whom I must renounce or approve,and what can I say against him? This man is well versed in the law,but of which rabbinical school he has followed I know not. He is as well muscled as a farmer. He is not a weak man. He is most certainly not a lunatic. He is not given to extravagance of any kind. He is not indulgent with wine. He is not betrothed to any of the young Jewish girls. There has been no scandal about him. His reputation is as clean as wool.

True--he thinks---this man has increased the tension in Palestine, first in Galilee,then in Jerusalem,and even in Jericho. He had taught nothing but love. He could not condemn him for that. True,as he had heard,whenever this impressive man left any town a good part of the Jewish population followed him.

Annas stands up,draws his fabulous robe about him tightly,as if to shut out his ultimatium,looks at Jesus one more time.

I will not try this man, he is thinking. Let Caiphas do it.

He orders the soldiers to take Jesus to Caiphas.

Jesus is led down the wide,column bordered steps by the four soldiers and the Centurion,their lanterns,and the lanterns of the servants of Annas splashing the marble portico with molten gold. The early morning air,made cold by a wet wind from the west,lifts the Roman cloaks,and they draw them about their shoulders fretfully.

At the foot of the steps a huge fire has been lighted,and a number of servants and soldiers stand around it,some of them eating from wooden bowls,others lounging lazily amid the warm flames.

Jesus, in his white robe,his bare feet,looks pale and cold. His drawn lips are purple,and there are deep bluish hues,from lack of food and from fatigue,about his down-cast eyes. His long hair lifts with the chill wind and is darkly damp from the wetness of the night.

His feet are bruises of blue,and the veins around his ankles and forearms are strutted,as if the blood has hardened from the wintry chill. The soldiers pause now for a silent moment before the welcoming fire. They stretch their palms above the smoky blaze,and rub their knuckles. A young girl hands them each a wooden bowl of steaming food. Jesus is neglected. He stands in the shadows,away from the warmth of the fire,the flickering flames throwing their light over his wind tossed garment.

To one side stand John and Peter. They huddle close. Their eyes are naked on the face of Jesus. John,who loves Jesus so, begans to weep. One of the soldiers,recognizing them,goes to where they stand, and there is a muffling of voices.

In the far off distance, the sound of a rooster crowing comes to all our ears. Jesus opens his eyes and looks at Peter.

We know that Peter has denied him.

The soldiers cast aside their finished bowls of food,push Jesus forward,and jerk him roughly up the steps of the temple.

Peter,bowing his trembling head in his gnarled hands, begans to sob. He flees into the darkness.

It is 5: A.M.

Dawn is breaking. Beyond the Dead Sea and the mountains of Moab the sun is rising. Jerusalem is bathed in crimson.

The Great Sanhedrin has met. They have formed two long lines of sixty four men--two for each year of Jesus' life. The trial has begun.

Jesus,still bound,still barefoot, still in his white tattered garment,still with his head bowed,his eyes closed,stands in the middle between the two rows of curious men.

A trumpet blates three mighty blasts. It is daylight,and the trial becomes legal. Nothing,to the Jew, is legal during darkness.

One by one witnesses stand and testify against Jesus,witnesses

as we already know have been paid by Caiphas to testify publically.

Jesus remains silent throughout. He never lifts his head,nor does he open his eyes.

Caiphas becomes restless. He cannot prove the prisoner guilty unless the prisoner himself confirms or denies the charge,and he cannot ask the judges to vote for conviction. He is trapped--trapped by Jesus' silence.

Nervously,with trembling hands gripping his splendid robe,Caiphas rises and stands before Jesus.

" Have you nothing to say in your own defense?" he asks,his voice quivering. "What about the evidence these men are furnishing against you?"

Jesus does not answer. Nor does he look at him.

Caiphas looks directly at Jesus. This is his fatal cue. Either Jesus must answer or he will walk out of the temple a free man. The sixty four judges lean in their chairs. Their hands,folded in their laps,are hard knots. Their eyes are molten glass.

" I adjure you, by the living God to tell us outright," shouts Caiphas,his voice ringing in the high atrium," are you the Messiah, the son of God?"

No one expects an answer. Least of all Caiphas.

" I am," Jesus answers.

A great chorus goes up among the judges. Their voices echo down the wide halls. Many rise from their chairs,phantom-like. There is a great commotion of sounds,of people moving about.

"What further need have we of witnesses?" Caiphas storms. "What is your verdict?"

They all shout at once,desiring to close the case as quickly as possible. " He is liable--to the penalty of death!"

Jesus stands unflinching. The judges file past. They spit on him. They strike him with their fists. He doubles under their hard blows to his adoman. He is led down the steps of the temple. The soldiers are weary,having stayed up all night,and they are,through the thinning of their patience,glad the trial is over and eager to make sport of him themselves.

Young John stands in the courtyard below. He is alone. Peter has fled. He is still in tears. He watches morosely as the soldiers bring Jesus down. He sobs anew at the sight of him slumped forward, his hair disheveled,his face wet with spit,his legs quivering from pain. It is too much for his young heart to stand. He knows Jesus is condemmed.

Sobbing hysterically, he runs toward Bethany to tell the news to Mary.

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The Sentence

It is 6: A. M.

The priests are leaving the meeting room in the temple. For them the trial is over. Behind them come the Levites and the temple hirelings. Jesus is placed under heavy Roman guard.

But to Caiphas the trial will not be over until he had seen Justice performed by the hands of the Romans,and Jesus put to death. Only through Jesus's death will his own position toward the temple be safe. Though he is high priest,and supposedly teaching the holy word of Abraham, he is deceiving monarch of his church,guarding jealously the title he holds,with or without a true Messiah.

He has sent a message to Pontius Pilate,who is housed in the Fortress Antonia,and which reads:

The great Sanhedrin, in its wisdom, has found guilty of blasphemy one Jesus of Nazareth,who has deceived the people by pretending to be King of the Jews. This man Jesus has been arrested, tried under law,and condemned to death.If it pleases the Procurator of his imperial majesty, Tiberius,the supreme council asks that he, Pontius Pilate,endorse the sentence and see that the sentence is executed on this day,before the hour of the oncoming Sabbath.

The Romans, like the Jews, are early risers,and the message reaches the apartments of Pontius Pilate a little after six. He returns the message by asking Caiphas to wait.

This interval of waiting gives Caiphas ample time to bring Jesus to the fortress by way of the west side of the temple to the main road near the palace of the Hasmoneans instead of straight north through the temple of Antonia. This route,Caiphas knows full well, will not

bring Jesus face to face with fellow Jews who, on seeing his poor condition, might revolt and cause another uprising. This is the longer route,and two hours pass in the delivering of Jesus from the temple of the Jews to the fortress of Antonia,so many people gathering to witness the prisoner the soldiers are forced to march him down the middle of the road. Jesus wearies,and that weariness shows on his face,on his every move,as we stand now at the gate of the fortress and watch as the soldiers bring him up the stone cobbled road toward us.
It is 8: A. M.

Five steps up from the Lithostrotos sits Pontius Pilate in his regal chair on its stone landing. Flanking the huge arches stand the priests. Behind Pilate stand his soldiers and his aides.

The priests stand aside now as the soldiers lead Jesus up the steps between them. His weariness is more evident now,and the strain he is enduring is almost too unbearable for me to watch. His head is still bowed. He glances neither to the right nor left. His lips are parched from want of water, and about his weary eyes only a flicker of light,of hope remains. Knowing what he must humanly endure makes his endurance worse. Already he sees the cross.

The soldiers march him now across the spacious stone terrace and halt him before Pilate. For the first time one sees the other. Neither are impressed. One is slightly nervous. The other is condoned to his fate.

Pontius Pilate,so history tells me,is a strict military man.His career is the Roman army,which he is profoundly dedicated. He is a hard man to a degree,but above his hardness he believes in justice. Though he hates the Jews,and hates worse still this barren land on which rests this Jewish city,though he hates the unhospitable way

in which the Jewish citizens mistreat his lonely soldiers,he hates more trickery,bribary,and the sarcasm of the Jewish high priests. He believes explicitly in sublime truth,though he does not always act on it,and his keen mind is forever searching for a weakness in the Jewish council upon which he can swing the pendulum of his hatred. One word from his lips and he could have all these Jews, including the high priests,run through with spears. He has abandoned his own Roman Gods,and has no faith in the new ones. Yet, he eyes Jesus with a note of compassion. He longs to rise from his chair and study Jesus from closer range,but if he leaves his chair for but a moment then the hearing becomes illegal.

Finally,his plaintive voice breaks the stillness of the morning.

"What charge do you bring against this man?" he points to Jesus.

Caiphas is shocked,and without doubt. He had been in the fortress the night before explaining the importance of this man's arrest,and now this Procurator of Rome acts as if he has never heard of Jesus.

" If this man," says Caiphas," were not a criminal,then we would not have handed him over to you. We would have tried him ourselves."

Pilate is quiet. He knows already that these Jewish priests have already tried this innocent appearing man and have sentenced him to death. He is angered by their effrontry.

"Then--take him in charge yourselves," he shouts,"and try him by your law!"

Caiphas and the curious priests tremble. They do not have the power,thanks to the Romans,to put anyone to death.

Caiphas,satisfied with his own cunningness,yet playing with his own life in order that Jesus be condemned,spats hysterically:

"We caught this man inciting our nation to revolt." He suddenly remembers the words Jesus once said about rendering unto Caesar's what was Caesar's,and he played upon it advantageous qualities."He

opposes the paying of taxes to Caesar and tries to pass himself off as our coming Messiah,the one we have so long awaited---a King!"

Pilate glares. The name Caesar brings him to vivid life,a life otherwise bored by this monotonous hearing. He is faithful to his last drop of blood to Caesar and to Rome. To play God is one thing, and harmless enough,but taxes and Caesar--these high priests were now charging this man with a high crime against Tiberius and the Roman empire. He frowns. These clever priests have rid themselves of a local problem by throwing this prisoner as a threat to his own empire. How could he defend Jesus? But--this is not his function.

Strangely,he wants to defend him. He wants desperately to do something that will place these nagging Jewish priests in the wrong, and he can topple them and their mighty temple from their high horse.

However,there is a little room for him to maneuver. It is in the form of a written note from his wife Claudia Procula. One of her maids comes forth through the throng and hands it to Pilate. It reads:

" Have nothing to do with this just man."

Pilate crumbles the paper in his hands and looks solemnly at Jesus. After a moments thought,he sends his aide to tell his wife not to worry,that he will not give the death sentence.

He dismisses the hearing. He sits,his fine military body slumped in the legal chair. He is worried. He despises the whole affair. He wants to find no guilt in the man who still stands before him,and would like to free him. This would set Jew against Jew and would overthrow the authority of the wily old Annas who ran the Jewish religious affairs through his hateful son-in-law Caiphas.

How he hates both of them! Their meddling has siphoned his last reserves. Slowly he raises his head and fixes his tired eyes

once more upon the sad face of Jesus. He gazes at him for a long time,as if to size him up,as if to try and understand him by merely looking at him,into opulent eyes that refuse to return his gaze.

He rises now from the legal chair and comes but a foot in front of Jesus. Both seem weary. Their faces are sad,despondant,paled by lack of sleep and the tension of the moment.

" Are you King of the Jews?" Pilate asks,almost in a whisper.

With swollen lips, Jesus answers,and their eyes meet. "Did you, as a Roman Governor, observe me acting as King of the Jews,or have others told you about my spiritual kingship?"

Pilate misunderstands.

" Your own nation and the high priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?"

Pilate looks at Jesus hopefully. All he needs is a denial. He is giving Jesus a chance to preserve his life.

" My kingdom," Jesus answers wearily," is not a worldly one." Pilate looks disappointed. This is not the answer he wants,not if he is to outst Annas and Caiphas.

"Then--you are a King after all," he says,suggestive,but giving Jesus a second chance.

" You are right," Jesus answers readily,his head rising slightly. "I am a king. For this purpose I was born,and for this purpose I came into the world--to give testimony to the truth."

" What is truth?" Pilate asks.

Jesus does not answer.

Deep meditative silence follows. Pilate frowns. His forehead changes into a terrace of wrinkles. He paces up and down,makes small circles around Jesus who does not move a muscle.

Pilate turns and faces Caiphas and the other priests who have remained at the edge of the massive terrace of the Lithostrotos.

He looks at them with acid disgust. They are thorns in his side,and he is eager to pluck them out.

" I can detect no guilt in this man," he half-shouts at them. His silvery eyes blaze. In the light of early morning his crimson robe looks aflame. The color matches the scorn in his heart.

Caiphas raises to his full height in a last play of dignity. He too is fetted with scorn. Nothing has gone as he has planned.

" But he--this man--stirs up the nation," Caiphas blates,pointing a cruel finger. "He began in Galilee and ended here!"

Something electric snaps in the air. Tension mounts.

"Ah!" Pilate shouts,suddenly and mercifully relieved. The relief shows itself in his every vein,his every muscle,most certainly in his blazingly triumphant eyes. "This man is a Galilean! He then, is not under my jurisdiction. He comes under the jurisdiction of Herod, Tetrarch of Galilee. Take this man Jesus to Herod!"

Jesus is escorted by the same four Roman soldiers and Centurion who had arrested him to the palace of Herod Antipas,but I do not follow. I know already from the scriptures that he will be back, dismissed by the murderer of John the Baptist who,seeing Jesus, thinks he is John come back to life.

Herod Antipas wants nothing to do with Jesus. The sight of him flings him into a state of convulsions. As if in a nightmare, he sees the head of John the Baptist laying on a silver platter,ordered by his spoiled wife--Herodias'--daughter Salome.

It is IO: A. M.

From the fortress Antonia where I have waited, I see the Roman soldiers returning with Jesus. They are marosely fatigued,fretful from loss of sleep,from ample food,and from prodding Jesus to and from from temple to palace,from palace to fortress,and they puncuate their lack of patience by kicking and gouging Jesus at every slight

opportunity,however trivial. They jerk so abruptly on the rope binding him that he stumbles,his bare feet scraping the jaggard stones,his lean body pivoting this way and that in order to maintain his balance,in order to keep from falling face down on the sharp dust laden stones.

A bright,crimson robe has been flung about his shoulders, a gift of mockery from Herod Antipas,and the glare of the mid-morning sun makes his auburn hair even more radiant against the contrasting glitter of the gem encrusted material. Though he slumps with a weariness that knows no bounds,though his unkept hair is in tumbles,though he is so starved for food and water he can barely stand,can barely place one foot in front of the other,to me,there is something magnificently majestic about his figure as he makes his way up the polished stone steps between the wall of Roman guards and to the wide terrace where Pilato has been summoned for the second hearing.

The fortress is surrounded now by swarms of people--citizens of Jerusalem,pilgrims from distant cities here for the passover observance,Roman soldiers,servants,and all the Jewish high priests.

A chorus of wild voices roar up above the uplifted heads of these curious,anxious--sometimes desperate--people now,and the multitudeous sounds are like a contineous clap of thunder.

Jesus is alone in his martyrdom.

Paid rousers,replinished from the purse of Caiphas,send out their cries: "Put him to death! Put him to death!" and the sudden doom of their false accusations becomes a frantic madness in my ears.

Their nerves drawn taut,Caiphas and the other priests stand rooted to the stones,awaiting the fatal cue,the verdict that will free or condemn Jesus to his death. Their eyes glitter like the watchful eyes of serpents anxious to strike,and the uplift of their beards

heads advertise their desperation to put this matter behind them, but as they have planned,as they have schemed,and not as the curator of Roman justice.

Pilate rises from his legal chair and raises both hands for the floundering mob to be quiet. Miraceously they obey. The noise ebbs like a dying wind.

" You brought this man before my tribunal," he announces,his voice a blatant shout. "In your presence I personally conducted this hearing,but detected no guilt in him regarding the charges you preferred against him. Nor did Herod either! For he referred this man's case back to us. This,then, is my verdict. He has deserved nothing in his actions that demand the penalty of death."

There is a wild uproar of vengeance.

Pilate shakes both his hands.

"Have him crucified!" they shout.

"Why--what wrong has he done?" Pilate cries.

"Have him crucified!" they repeat wildly.

Pilate remains firm. His voice is calm,but final.

"I will discipline him. And then I will set him free."

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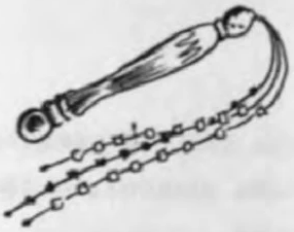
The Discipline



It is II: A.M.

The four soldiers and the Centurion escort,or drag,Jesus into the open courtyard of the pretorium,and strip him naked.

The watery eyes of Jesus flinch,then dull remorsefully as the strip of cloth about his loins and male parts is unknotted and falls to the stones. Above all else, the Jew is modest beyond the point of the ridiculuous,and any display of nuditism shocks him into immediate dispair. It is said that they refused to watch the Roman games in the military arena within the walls of Jerusalem because the young athletes often performed naked,or nearly so.

They bind him now to a stone column used for the purpose of hanging gear and horses trappings. He is pulled up by the arms until his stomach and thighs lie flat against the verticle shaft. Two of the soldiers,armed with leather whips tipped with the ankle bone of sheep,take their places on either side of him. By Hebrew law the number of strokes applied to a prisoner is thirty-nine,but these soldiers,fatigued,waary of the proceedings with Jesus,are legionaries without restraint,and they will go on--we know from the scriptures--to the point of making him faint.

At Pilate's command,who stands now along the balustrades of the courtyard with a great number of his soldiers and aids,and the high priests,the soldiers begin the scourging. They alternate their strokes. One then the other. The sounds of the many knotted throngs ring flatly in the spaciousness of the courtyard as they strike and coil around the naked shoulders and back of Jesus.

Red whelps appear on his sun bronzed back. They rise suddenly, from each recoil of the whip, swelling into enormous terraces across the shoulder blades and the sudden rise of his buttocks.

Jesus does not flinch, nor does he whimper nor cry out, although we must remember that his skin is already sore and nerved by the millions of little intra-dermic haemorrhages brought about by the sweat of blood in the garden of olives. The blood now, creeping up from his inner body to the swollen crevices, burst when struck by the sharp ankle bones, and it gushes out, and streams down his back, down his buttocks and along his inner thighs.

Again and again the two whips, with all their strings of madness, find their mark, and the sounds are now a crescendo of pain in my ears, pains and sounds of which I cannot, and will never be able to escape. The skin is so thin now where the furrows stand out like marble that it cannot remain intact by the constant bombardment of heavy blows, and the shreds become detached from the muscle and hang down like tattered remnants of cloth.

The slap, slap of the leather, cut into a hundred strips each, become harder and harder by the stroke, and the body of Jesus shudders, like one naked in a gale, but he still remains silent. This silence seems to redouble the satanic rage of the soldiers, and they are now as unchained demons.

The blood flows from Jesus's shoulders down his legs to the stones, which is now drenched in red. And it is scattered like rain as the lifted whips fling through the warm air, strike maddingly, and withdraw strips of flesh.

The throngs, in the masterful hands of the two soldiers, are accomplishing their deadly work. Jesus buckles. Giddiness and nausea

engulf him. Shivers run down his blood drenched spine. His legs give way under him,his feet slipping in the pool of blood.

The soldiers fume. They fear he is dead,and they are not yet through with him. He must live,until they have carried out to full extent the anarchy of their joy. They untie his wrists. He falls limply to the pavement. He is unconscious.

Water is brought by another soldier and it is dashed upon him. He moves. A groan pours from his parched and bleeding lips. They lift him up roughly,in order to revive him,turn him over,face up, and his nakedness displays itself in full view of the swarming horde who lean over the balustrades to watch.

He is a magnificient male,even in his humbliness,even in his bath of blood and water,even in his armour of purple bruises and open wounds. Nothing,however merciless,can take that sublimity from him. Down his thick chest,and below his naval huge purple puffs show plainly above the canvas of his olive skin,put there directly after his arrest by the fists of the high priests when he had proclaimed himself the son of God,and at that very same location in the temple where the priests,earlier,had paid homage to his father. Now those purple bruises were like brazen medals to me as they shone through his sore skin,and he is wearing them as if they are badges of honor--of which indeed they are.

Still half-unconscious,yet half-revived,he can sit upright now, as they shove him onto a horizontal stone,and drape about his raw shoulders the crimson robe gifted by Herod.

His dark head is bowed. His eyes are closed. His hands cling to the other numbly,and hang down between his knees. The robe does little to conceal his nakedness and,lifting one hand feebly,he fumbles for the cloak and stretches it over his thighs. In that moment

I see the dull glare in his shadowy eyes,and they are the saddest eyes I am ever to see. Mingled there is the shame he feels in his nakedness before these callous watchers,both male and female,and battling that shame is the despair that he must humanly endure for the sake of all mankind. He has become a toy, a plaything,in the hands of these merciless,ignorant,spiritless soldiers--a victim of their mercy and at their mercy,and he must allow them to carry their folly to the ultimate end. Momentarily he is theirs. His body,but never his spirit, is theirs to become mutilated,if they so will to mutilate him,and he must not recoil one step,must not defend himself, but rather--must yield to their every dispicable whim.

One of the soldiers,playfully, picks up a bramble of thorns, the Paliurus Aculeatus,which grows in abundance around Jerusalem, and from them plaits a crude crown.(for nineteen centuries Jesus will be known by this crown) These thorns are longer and sharper and harder,even,than those of the Acacia,and the soldier roughly places it on the head of Jesus,then wraps the remaining strands around and about his forehead. Another soldier picks up a heavy stick. With this he beats down the thorns. The thorns dig deep. the scalp bleeds. Long riverlets of blood stream down Jesus' face, into his closed eyes,down his cheekbones,and into his beard. Another soldier gathers up a rope of dried hemp. He binds this around the matt of thorns,then around Jesus's face,over his blood soaked beard and down around and into a knot at the nape of his neck.

Jesus is sill silent. He moves his body willingly,as they want and whenever they want to move him. He is theirs. His poor face now is ravished and deathly pale. He looks as if he is beyond care,even beyond pain. He is at their mercy,but mercy he begs not.He must

endure and with silence to the very end the program which is at bay, the ritual, the ultimate agony mankind has planned for him. It will all be over soon. He does not deplore them with eyes of pity. He gives minute glances at their callous hands as if they are administering to him, rather than inflicting pain, as if their rough hands are comforting rather than offense, as if they are holy hands rather than profaned. He is already forgiving them. And he is pitying them, rather than seeking pity. He is giving to them every consideration, but asks for none for himself. He will not spoil their folly, though his body is numb from a million tiny agonies, though that he is actually in a state of shock.

As I watch him there, my own body wracked with a throbbing agony I have never felt before nor will feel since, I think that, perhaps, he is in too much pain to cry, or speak, or cry out to his tormentors. They have hurt him that much!

One of the soldiers lifts Jesus's limp hand and thrusts a staff into it, pretending it as a scepter of a king. The hand lags, the bloody fingers move, the staff twists askew. Angrily the soldier jerks it away and, with a sudden, startingly terrifying stroke, swings the staff across Jesus's downcast face. It strikes his well-shaped nose, breaking the septum. The blood gushes forth, streaming wildly through the mask of rushes, soaking his beard. It streams down his chest, beneath the robe and gathers into the matt of his nakedness.

Jesus, in that instant, flings back his head, and his eyes spread crazily, in a stupid impression of dumb terror.

It is enough! It is too much!

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Condemned

It is I2 Noon.

Once more, in the fortress of Antonia Pilate sits in his legal chair,high up on that stone terrace,flanked by towering marble columns,and over-looking the populace of Jerusalem.

Below,and I am amidst them,swarm the curious,callous crowds, but unlike me,demanding vengeance,demanding that Jesus be brought before public view and put to death.

There is a great roar,like enormous waves in a restless sea, and people push one against the other,pivoting and manuevering to get a more advantageous position near the great terrace on which Pilate sat,along with his aides and the Jewish high priests.

Pilate glances angrily at the mob below. He is sick inside. Internally sick over the entire defrauding affair. He had not wanted Jesus harmed. Thoughts of his wife and her religious concern for this pious man returns frequently to haunt him. He wants it over and done, but the life of a man is at stake and he is desirous to see it through,and to spare him if he can.

He raises a hand for the mob to be silent.

" Now look," he shouts. " I am bringing him out to you,and you must understand that I find no guilt in him!"

The Centurion is summoned and Jesus is brought forth. He is in poor condition. Two of the four soldiers is having to hold him up, so that he can walk,and his feet drag,his arms are like limp rags, and his weighted head sags disheveled,lifeless. His crimson robe drapes his stooped shoulders,and the dried blood and torn flesh has stuck it to his skin. Down his bruised and swollen chest the long streamers of blood have also dried now,and are marking of deep purple in the intensified light. The blood has dried amid the coarse black

hair on his thighs and calves,and that too is painfully dark,almost the color of bark. The matt of thorns and hemp about his death-white face has become a solidified mask of dried blood and hair from his beard and clots from his broken nose. All this has conjealed,and the contours of his features have become petrified within this awesome helmet of rushes and thorns,of beard and blood. His breathing comes in deep,struggling,guttural gasps,which pours from his mouth and from between the layers of his blood-soaked beard,for his nostrils are clogged.

He is an awesome sight,wretched,forlorn,abandoned,at the mercy of the world,and it seems that Pilate senses this as he turns and stares at this poor creature who wabbles between the two robust soldiers.

The eyes of Pilate grow wide,and as wild as a startled hawks. He had intended only a flogging for this prisoner,then to set him free as a warning to the other Jews,but not a mutilating such as this! By the Gods of Rome! What had his soldiers done to him?

He turns away in disgust. He is sick at his stomach. He nurses one hope--that the Jews will see this poor man in his present condition and have pity on him. He sees that he may can capitalize on this pity and this revulsion. He sees this too in the faces of the crowd as some of them turn away remorsefully,as some of them hide their faces in their hands,as some of them openly weep.

Rising from his legal chair, Pilate goes now to Jesus. He stands mutely and looks at him, a long drawn,tortured look. His eyes glitter in the noon day's sunlight. Do we detect a trace of tears. Does men of such strong mettle as Pilate dare weep at the sight of revulsion.

Perhaps so. Pilate is known to be compassionate.

Now,more than at any other time since he has met Jesus, he longs to help him--to help this poor creature whom his own soldiers have

tortured so--even almost beyond recognition. Pity lies naked in the deep pools of his liquid eyes,and rage runs rampant in his heart.

He almost sobs as he turns to the crowd.

"Behold this man!"

"To the cross with him!" cries the line of high priests,in a fleeting chant that resounds in every ear.

Pilate looks puzzled. He cannot understand the nature of these unpredictable high priests.

The high priests understand only one objective momentarily. Jesus must die.

Pilate moves closer to Jesus. Every second is counting gravily. He is trying to save a man who has no interest in being saved.

" Do you not know," he whispers to Jesus," that I have power to set you free---and power even to crucify you?"

He has tried everything.

The dry,broken lips move beneath the hardened mask of blood and rushes. The voice of Jesus is hoarse: " You have no power whatever to harm me,unless it is granted to you from above."

Pilate looks at him,stunned.

"If you free this man,you are not a friend of Caesar!" came the chant of the high priests,aiming the fatal blow at Pilate.

This is a naked threat to Pilate. He has done all he can. Later,when this is all over and done,he will tell his wife Claudia: "I did not intend to condemn the man. His crime was religious, so I turned him over to Caiphas."

But now Pilate ordersa basin of water brought before him. He gives up at last the fight. He dips both hands into the water. " I am innocent of the blood of this just man. The responsibility is yours." He looks angrily at Caiphas,to whom this is intended.

Caiphas is victorious at last. Jesus will die.

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Road to Calvary

It is I: P.M.

The purpose of capital punishment is always to deter crime, and it is always executed in a public place for all to see. For Jesus, it was to be on a little hill outside the walls of Jerusalem called Golgotha or "the skull," for it was shaped like the crown of a skull protruding above the desolation of stone and sand. It stood a quarter of a mile from the fortress Antonia. Jesus would have to walk this quarter of a mile, and with the crossbeam of the cross on his shoulders. The up-right portion of the cross, along with two more, already stood on the mount of Golgotha as permament tools for the purpose of crucifixion, for the Romans never crucified less than three men at a time. These up-right beams, stained a dark maroon from the blood of numerous other criminals, rose in the hot light as grim reminders to other Jews under Roman martial law.

Two other criminals, besides Jesus, were to be crucified also this day, and they, along with Jesus, are being led now from the prison of Antonia and out into the blaring sunlight.

A man by the name of Abenadar has been selected by Pilate to command the procession to the hill of Golgotha and to carry out the sentence. Abenadar is well schooled in executions, and knows beforehand what is expected of him. He orders a cavalryman to saddle up and forefront the procession. A platoon of legionaries form a box around the three prisoners. They are armed with huge metal shields and sharp spears, to protect the prisoners on the way to the site of execution. Three guards array themselves in front of each of the three criminals. They are to carry the painted signs which proclaim the identity and the crime of each.

The sign to identify Jesus reads:

In Aramiaic--"Jeshu han nostri malka dihudaey." In Latin--"Hic

est Juses rex Judaeorum." meaning: "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews."

Three crossbeams are ordered by Abenadar from the supply room, and as they await them I notice the face of Jesus imprisoned beneath his mask of thorns and hemp,see his painful eyes as he stands meekly and watches the Roman soldiers,chatting and joking,and slaking their thirst for wine and water. Jesus has not had a drink of water nor a mouth full of food since the feast of the last supper,and that had consisted of unlevened bread,bitter herbs,and wine diluted with water. He thirsts now,but he dares not ask for water. One of the other criminals,a boastful,arrogant type,asks for water,but is refused.

The soldiers have brought the crossbeams from the supply room now and they are placed on the shoulders of the condemned. Jesus sags under the one hundred and twenty pounds of hard cypress,and his blood soaked legs buckle.

Abenadar is concerned about Jesus,but about him only. The other two prisoners have not been scourged and they are strong and healthy. But Jesus is doubly weak from loss of blood,lack of food and water, and is mentally in a state of shock. Abenadar is afraid he will never make it to Golgotha on his own.

The procession begans. It is drudgingly slow. The entire assemblage is tuned to Jesus's gait. They can move only as fast as Jesus moves, which is at snails pace. He can hardly put one foot in front of the other. His bare feet are broken,and stumbling through the strewn stones they burst and bleed anew. He is leaving behind him a trail of his own blood!

His one garment,the crimson gift from Herod,is so soiled with grime and blood it seems a part of the torn,wretched,wound infested body beneath. He is one mass of agony--and that agony advertises itself

from the quiver of every muscle,his wobbling legs,his twitching hands,his sunken face resting on the beam,bloated and swollen now with fever.

Swarms of people,in hundreds,follow him,anxious to catch a glimpse of the prisoners about to be crucifed,and of the man whose face is hidden in a cruel crown of thorns.

What has he done? their silence seems to cry,to be punished so!

Women clutch at their eyes. Some weep remorsefully. Children peer from behind the naked legs of the Roman soldiers and stare wild-eyed at the man drenched in blood. Silence invades the whole of the assembly like an ill-omen. Doom is written on every face,which matches strangely the three faces of the condemned,and that doom heaps upon the pocession and grips it with a terrible,awesome silence.

Like a slowly dying animal that must crawl on its belly,the men and women move toward the death site. now and then a moan comes from one of the women. Sighs grip the tongues of the men. Children whimper.

The sun pours down like boiling liquid. Dust,churned up by hundreds of feet,boils up from the ground like a fog.

Jesus,still managing to keep the crossbeam on his shoulders,moves as if in a dream--or a nightmare of pain. The sharp edges of the cypress have cut into the whip festers and fresh blood pours down his back. His breath comes in quick,rapid gusts. His eyes,in their pain,are livid white. He staggers. His legs melt beneath him. He slumps into a drenched heap onto the stones. The beam crushes him.

Abenadar,who is near the lead of the column,hurries back and,with the help of another soldier,lifts him to his feet.

Abenadar looks around at the crowd,searching. There is a stout looking man to the flank of Jesus,his leather jerkin cut into a V to reveal a hairy chest,and sliced at his biceps where huge forearms bulge nakedly in the sun. He is a farmer,named Simon of Cyrene,and

Abenadar slaps him on the shoulders with his leather throng and commands that he carry Jesus's crossbeam. The man grumbles something indistinguishable then lifts the crossbeam as if it was a feather and places it on his own shoulders.

Abenadar looks at Jesus and wishes the ordeal was over and done. He shakes his head wearily. He is afraid Jesus will not live long enough to be executed.

The pocession moves again. This time even slower than before. It is in the vicinity of the Via Dolorosa now,nearing the entrance to the Gennath gate,and the fatigue of everyone present shows plainly in their features. Some turn back,overcome by the heat and thirst. Children cry out for the arms of their mother,and small boys,full of vibrant energy,run back and forth along the length of the pocession, hopeful of missing nothing. To them,as to many grown people also, a crucifixion is a show,and they fail to see the agony beneath. It is the mark of callousness in the human heart.

Jesus now is overcome by the fierce heat. He wabbles dizzily. He slumps again,falls carelessly on his knees,which are already raw and bleeding. With a great super-human effort he tries to rise. He lifts his shoulders up,his arms tremble savagely,and his face momentarily is turned toward the sky. He glimpses its fresh blue,its fold of white fleecy clouds. His tear-rimmed eyes search longingly,almost desperately.

A woman,tall of statue and enshrouded from head to toe in a long purple robe pushes her way through the mass of human flesh. Witha rustle of her robe she kneels before the Panting Jesus. In her hands is a folded napkin and she thrusts it out anxiously and presses it to Jesus's dust covered,blood caked face. He murmurs a token of thanks. Her own face suddenly changes,from a hard brittleness to a softness

of sublimity. Tears roll down her cheeks in unchecked streams. Rising, still clutching the napkin on whose Jesus' face is crimson imprinted, she disappears amidst the throng of curious onlookers.

She is Veronica.

The pocession, having halted until Jesus rises once more, starts again and passes through the Gennath gate. The little hill of Golgotha is but a few yards away now, and the three up-right cypress beams are eclipsed against the vivid blue of the sky.

Outside the gate, standing in waiting, is Mary, the mother of Jesus. With her is young John, whose trembling arm is about her shoulders, comforting her. With them is Mary, the mother of James, Salome, wife of Zebedee, and Mary Magdalen.

As the pocession moves it comes abreast of them and all their eyes, as they search out Jesus, suddenly cringe with remorse. They move along, one holding against the other, move as mute mediums, their long robes folding into the others, their silent faces concealed under heavy shrouds, move like desolate sleepwalkers, in this moment of awesome pain. They do not notice the sharp stones that cut their soft sandled feet, nor the intense heat pouring down on their backs from above, nor the cruelty of the Romans, nor the swarming men and women come to see the loving one they own, body and soul, put to death. They only see the whole of the assembly, the ultimate of its doing, and they are numb with grief, paralized with an agony that knows no bounds.

What glorious women!

It is said that of all the world the Jewish women are the purest, and the most devoted to their husbands and their sons.

John, fighting back sobs, is begging Mary not to cry, and asks her not to look, to turn back with him into the walls of Jerusalem until it is over.

But Mary, like most mothers, is persistent. She had held Jesus in her arms when he drew his first breath. So she must be with him when he draws his last.

She pats John's hand affectionately,attempting to comfort him who needs comforting as much as she. And they continue on,their arms around the other women,their faces bowed,swaying as they began the incline up to Golgotha,groping their way numbly--like the blind trying to lead the blind.

Jesus,to their right,and walled in by the Roman soldiers with their huge metal shields,glances in their direction and sees them. And for the first time he lets out an animal-like agonizing moan.

His head wobbles from side to side suddenly ,as if he has lost control of his nerves,for seeing them has rented his heart to the core,and it is all he can do to stand upright. This has hurt him as nothing else can. He is not here to hurt others,and realizing painfully that they are hurt on the account of him,shudders his whole frame with mortal agony.

He looks up faintly,waarily,and sees the three up-right beams at the top of the hill. It will soon be over. He sees too the limpidity of the clear blue sky beyond and tears overflow his pain whitened eyes and run into his beard.

His parched lips part,the sores peeling and tearing the flesh away, and he murmurs heartbrokenly:

"If this is done to the green wood,what must be the fate of the dry?'

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The Crucifixion

It is 2: P.M.

The pocession has reached the crest of Golgotha now and the swarms of people have assembled themselves around the tor of the hill,leaving a small bare knoll vacant where stand the three upright cypress beams. Within this clearing are the soldiers,the executioner,the two criminals and Jesus.

Jesus,drenched with sweat,the streams pouring down his tired, pale face,stands wearily where the soldiers have left him and watches with defiant eyes the proceedings about to take place. He has come to the end of his journey,the purpose for which he came to earth, and stooped a little forward,his long hair lifted faintly by an east wind,this ultimate martyrdom etches itself plainly on his features. He is already to the point of death,but he knows he must not give up his soul until he,himself, is ready to do so. His eye-lids blink, and close slowly over his eyes as if he is asleep,and the whole of his weary frame sways back and forth drunkenly.

The sun is high now and fiercly warm.Below the hill,in the level stretches between Golgotha and Jerusalem the branches of the olive trees and the tiny blue and yellow flowers growing amidst the stones, shimmer in a low,moanful breeze. Tiny birds dart here and there,disturbed by human intrusion,and over head,huge black vultures circle lazily,waiting for the kill.

On the hill there is an awesome silence. The spectacle about to be performed turns the faces of the crowd into stone masks. Nothing can be heard but the whispering of the wind through the low limbs of the olive trees.

In this heavy,intense silence,it seems that God is very near. Jesus lifts his agonized head slightly and his watery eyes pierce the sky--as if searching.

A chalice of wine is brought,slightly drugged,for the three condemned men to drink. It is a custom of the Romans,mixing the wine with grains of incense which had the property of drugging the senses. It is an act of mercy.

The two thieves drink grugdingly,but Jesus refuses to drink. He shakes his head wearily. He must feel,as a human being,the fullness of pain.

Abenadar gives a signal to his soldiers. They move in quickly and began to strip the three prisoners. When they get to Jesus the crimson cloak he is wearing has stuck to his skin,and as they rip it awaythe skin and dried blood come with it. Jesus gives a flinch, and his eyes sadden deeply as he stands before the crowd naked.

A sudden murmur wells up from the staring faces,

The crucifixion has begun!

The crossbeam is taken from Cimon's shoulders and placed on the ground. Two soldiers take Jesus by the shoulders and pull him backwards until he is prone. They fit the beam under the back of his neck. The executioner kneels beside Jesus's outstretched right hand. The executioner probes the wrist of Jesus until he has found the right spot where he then places a spike. He lifts a hammer and,with one sure stroke,drives the spike through Jesus's wrist and into the hard cypress beam. The mement the spike penterates the flesh the thumb of Jesus draws inward over the spike. The executioner straddles Jesus' naked body and repeats the process on the left wrist. The sound of the huge hammer against the massive head of the spike resounds through the vast,desolate distance.

The sound vibrates in Mary's ears,fill her eyes with hot tears and John,ever protective,pulls her head to his bosom so that she cannot see.

Women began to weep. Some of the men lifts their head and prays silent. Many,especially those with small children,turn away from the hill and back to the safe walls of Jerusalem.

It is too much! They cannot bear to watch!

Now that the arms of Jesus are pinned to the cross-beam two soldiers lift it up,pulling Jesus by his wrists hung onto the spikes,and drag him to the up-right piece. They lift upward until the mortise hole is over the upright,then let it suddenly drop.

There is a sound of tearing flesh. Jesus moans as the weight of his body hangs by his nailed wrists. Sharp arrows of pain shoot up his arms and to the innumerable nerveends which have been laid bare by the wounds. These thousands of painful shocks add up and multiply, each one increasing the sensitivity of the nervous system.

I wonder why this dreadful pain does not bring on a fainting fit? But--how clear it is to me now that from beginning to end Jesus dominates. He directs his own passion.

His right foot is being pulled up now and flattened against the up-right beam. His left foot is lifted and placed on the right,and the third spike is driven in,pinning both feet to the beam.

Jesus' body is now dragging by his arms,which are stretched out obliquely,and sag. Inexpressible pain darts like lightening through his fingers and then like a trail of fire right up his shoulders and bursts in his brain. (the most unbearable pain that a man can experience is that caused by wounding the great nervous centres.It always brings on a fainting fit.) But Jesus does not faint.

His bare shoulders,wounded by the whips and by carrying the beam, scrape against the rough wood as his limp body sags,and fresh blood

runs down between his back side and the beam and drips on the sand. His poor head leans forward. The thickness of his crown prevents him from leaning against the wood. He lifts his head faintly,but drops it again as the thorns are driven deeper into his scalp. Every muscle is strutted to the point of bursting through the bruised flesh. Each one of them can be counted as a sepérate unit of his body,for they stand out so vividly their contours become exact. Every vein stands out in third dimensional imagery,strung taut as strings. They are like blue webs criss-crossing his body,up his thighs,up the inner portions of his arms,and their tautness advertise his intense pain--that unendurable pain of the median nerves!

The other two thieves are now being impaled upon their selected crosses,but I do not noticed minutely. My tormented eyes come back to rest on poor Jesus's face. The blood he has lost at Gethsemani, in the pretorium,and at other times,mingled with the fresh flow of blood that is now oozing and congealing rapidly,is almost the sum total of all his blood,and he is deathly fatigued. Yet,he appears to be resting on the cross now,the immobility of his body coinciding with the general lowering of his vitality.

His features are drawn. His mouth is half open and his lower lip is beginning to droop. Saliva flows down to his beard,mingling with the blood flowing from his injured nose which,from his struggle to breathe,placing force on his nostrils,has started bleeding anew. His throat is dry and on fire. He can no longer swallow.

He thirsts!

Jesus thirsts--and there is so much water in the world!

"Adhaesit lingua me faucibus meis," he cries: "My tongue has cleaved to my jaws."

A simpleton of a soldier,wishing to hide his compassion beneath

a mocking jest,soaks a sponge in posca acetum and holds it up to him at the end of a reed.

A strange phenomenon occurs. The muscles of his arms stiffen of themselves. The contraction becomes more and more concentrated. Hi deltoid muscles and his biceps strain,stand out vividly. His fingers draw inward. It is cramp!

This cramp brings on a sudden stiffness. On his thighs and on his calves there are monstrous rigid bulges,and his toes bend stiffly. He is suffering from tetanus,a prey to those horrible spasms,which, once seen can never be forgotten!

His stomach muscles are tightening. Then the muscles in his neck bulge,then the respiratory.The solar plexus sinks inwards,and so do the hollows under his collar bone.

His breathing now is shorter, and lighter. The air enters his lungs with a whistling sound,but does not come out. He can breathe in but he cannot breathe out. He thirsts for air. He gasps for it. He is in the throes of asthma.

A flush gradually spreads over his face. His face turns a violet purple then blue. He is asphyxiating! His lungs,which are loaded with air,can no longer empty themselves. His forehead is covered with sweat. His eyes are prominent,and they roll from side to side.

What pain must be hammering in his head!

He is going to die! Well, it is best so. He has suffered enough.

But no--his hour has not yet come.

He is saving himself from death until the moment he wills it,and he is doing this by pushing downward on his pinnioned feet,which in turn forms a fulcrum which lifts his tortured body so that he can breathe. The forcing of his weight against his wounded feet starts the blood pouring anew. It runs down the beam to the dust where it quickly conjeals.

He has three more hours to live on the cross! And the only way he can endure this and prolong his death is to push at intervals on his jaggard feet so that he can breathe.

His wounds are fastly becoming infected. This is certain to happen,since he is suffering from asphyxiation. A light colored transparent lymph is oozing from him,which collects at the deepest parts of his wounds into a wax-like crust. False membranes are forming,which is creating a serum mixed with pus.

" My sores are putrified and corrupted," he means!

A swarm of horrible blue flies,such as the ones found in abattoirs and charnel-houses,are whirling around his stiffened body. They suck on his wounds. They set on his face and he cannot drive them away.

Many of the people are now moving back toward Jerusalem,having satisfied their fill of the execution. But Mary and John remain,along with the other two women,as they hover a little down the hill from the cross,and Abenadar and the soldiers remain. They respect Jesus now in his prolonged suffering more than they have before. They no longer joke among themselves,and their chattering has ceased,robbed now of its sardonic gestures. Occasionally they glance up at Jesus,and their hard normadic eyes flinch.

As they look up his tortured eyes are fastened on them there below, and his parched lips,trembling faintly,with salavia dripping,murmurs:

"Forgive them,Father, for they know not what they do."

They cower under his words,but they fail to understand. Silently, keenly aware of conscience now,they slump on the ground beneath the cross. Stubbornly,they roll dice for his crimson garment--the gift of Herod.

Overhead,the sky is darkening. There is going to be a great storm.

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Jesus Dies

It is 5: P.M.

Jesus has remained on the cross now for almost three hours and he is dying.Death shows in the purple contours of his downcast face,in that pinched look about the nose which is the forerunner of death,and the dull marble opaqueness in his eyes.

Nothing has happened in the past three hours of any consequence, save that the waiting has become sharp agony,and the heart,for those who have loved him,has numbed. Most of the curious spectators have returned to Jerusalem. So have the high priests,though they are worried why it is taking Jesus so long to die. Soon it would be the Sabbath,and they wanted him down and buried before the coming of the religious holiday. The soldiers are still here,waiting impatiently to carry through with their final orders,and so is young John and the three women.

Overhead now the sky is as dark as night,invading the whole of the countryside with a sinister premotion of doom,and there is an eclipse. The moon has gone between the earth and the sun. A wild wind is beginning to stir,boiling the leaves beneath the olive trees, and whirling Golgotha into a caldron of white dust.

The soldiers rise from the ground where they have been idly waiting,pull their cloaks tightly about their shoulders and search the dark sky. Dismally they glance at Jesus on the cross. Strangely they coinside the two. Their respect for Jesus is growing.

Jesus is dying. And Judas is already dead,hanging himself by the limb of a fig tree. He who had condemned Jesus,has died first.

Jesus' awesome,pain-wracked eyes glance round to where Mary his mother stands down from the hill,her enshrouded head resting on young John's chest. Jesus, better than anyone, knows the imminence of death. He motions with the tilt of his head to John. John sees him through tear-rimmed eyes. He steps toward the cross,with Mary in his arms.

They come up on the rock and stand almost in front of Jesus. Mary bows her head and begans to sob. John,swept up on the heart piercing tragedy of this death scene,also begans to weep. They cling to one another. They look up into Jesus' eyes and his,too, are blinded with tears.

He tells John to look after his mother when he is gone. John nods his head in promise. He tells him to regard Mary as his own mother from this day forward. This John confirms. John fastens his arm around Mary a little tighter. He understands.

They remain for a sad,silent moment,looking up at Jesus,then they turn and walk back to the two waiting women. It isn't much of a farewell. Jesus could have said much more. He could have unlocked his reluctant man's heart,and he could have told her how much he loved her,how profoundly he understood all her sufferings through the years of his work,and how he was torn by the heaviness of her heart during this awesome moment. But he knew such words would only add to her grief.

The hour has come. It is time for him to die!

"Eli Eli," he cries hoarsely. "Lema sabachthani!" (My God, my God,why hast thou forsaken me?"

He then lifts his shaking head and stares about him. He looks but for a moment,then sighs: "It is finished!"

This is his final cry. His head slumps forward. *He is dead!*

The wind suddenly gathers momentum. It flows over the fields of

little flowers laying them low,rambles through the twisted limbs of the olives,scurries up the wild birds,flings the old driven leaves into a caldron,and drives the layers of dust onto everything.

The white horse,riden by the calvaryman,breaks from his tething, lunges forward as if on springs,and bounds off down Golgotha,across the level stretch of terrain and through the Gennath gate.

The soldiers scatter hereand there,gathering up their military belongings,staring stupidly at the sky,then at the cross on which Jesus is impaled.

The earth trembles. There is an earthquake. A small crack fissues the rock from west to east,and goes across the road and through the gate of Jerusalem and then crosses the city and through the temple. It splits the huge inner veil of the temple from top to bottom,and goes on east and rocks the big wall and splits the tombs in the cemetery goes on to the Dead Sea,leaving fissues in the earth,the rocks, and crosses over into the great mountains.

The Roman soldiers are terrified. Abenadar kneels suddenly before the cross,the crimson robe twisted in his tough palms,and cries up to Jesus:

"Surely--this man is the son of God!"

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The Burial

It is 6: P. M.

It is an hour before dusk. The earthquake has subsided. The sky is once more clear,but beset with gloom. Mourners,fretting over their dead in the storm,are going to and fro in and out of Jerusalem,to the cemetery and back again,and bedlam is rampant.

Joseph of Arimathia,with a degree of courage,has already gone to Pontius Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. It has been granted,and Pilate is puzzled that Jesus has died so soon. He has sent Soldiers back to Golgotha and,with an iron beam,they have broken the legs of the two thieves,who are not yet dead, and,to custom,have marked Jesus body with the tip of a spear in his right side.

The body of Jesus must be buried before the onset of the Sabbath so Joseph must hurry. On the way back from Pilate he meets Nicodemus,the Pharisee who had once sought Jesus in the dead of the night,and they decide to carry out the burial. Joseph,since there was so little time left before nightfall,had compromised in allowing Jesus to be buried in a sepulcher in the garden of Golgotha he had carved out of solid stone for himself. Nicodemus is pleased by this,and wants to assist in the funeral arrangements and to see that Jesus is buried as an honorable man.

It is almost ironic that,when Jesus died,his burial was arranged not by Peter,or John, or any of the other followers who,only last night had boasted how much they loved him,---but by a Sadducee, a Pharisee, and a pagan.

Nicodemus sends a servant to his home for one hundred pounds of spics--a mixture of myrrh and aloes,which is necessary for the final anointment of Jesus's body. Joseph,in the meantime, has purchased a band of fine linen to be used as the funeral shroud.

They rush back to Golgotha,to where John and the women are still keeping vigil.

Before we continue the burial,and before anyone can fully understand the burial of Jesus,we must first find out how the Jews bury their dead. One thing seems certain. Their type of burial has nothing in common with the embalming practises of the Egyptians. In the whole of the bible, we onfly find two examples of mummification,those of Jacob and Joseph:this was in Egypt,for they had become Egyptians. Neith was it a Jewish custom to enclose with bands,to use natron, or to disembowel. After the eyes and the mouth of the dead person has been closed,the naked body is then washed. Then it is anointed with perfumed essences--Myrrh,which is in the form of resin extracted from an umbelliferous plant,the balsamodendron. It has a mild scent and antiseptic qualities,then aloes,which is of agallock,and sold in chips,soccotrine aloes,from the island of Soccotra(in the case of Nicodemus in the burial of Christ 32 kilograms of myrrh and aloes in equal parts was used,and only for the wounds). Then the naked body is wrapped in a shroud,and is carried,with the face uncovered,as far as the tomb,and part of the shroud is laid over the head to reach as far as the feet. The shroud is then held by three or four bandlets, which bind the feet,fix the arms alongside the body,or crossed over the chest,and is tied tightly in the region of the neck.

Now there is no time between the taking down of Jesus from the cross and burying him before nightfall and the coming of the sabbath to carry out the final ritual of burial,so it is decided hastily among

the little group at Golgotha to bury him in the tomb as quickly as possible then for the women to return the day after the sabbath to carry out the final anointing.

Joseph and Nicodemus and John go to the cross and first wrest from Jesus' pierced feet the spike which has impaled him to the wood. They lift the patibulum--or crossbeam,without taking Jesus' hands from the wood. Two take each end of the crossbeam,and another pick up Jesus' feet, and they lift and carry his 176 pounds to the tomb.

The tomb is set in the side of a twelve foot hill facing the gate of Gennath,and,from front to back, measures fifteen feet. From floor to ceiling it is seven feet,and from wall to wall five feet. There is an atrium,or open forecourt in front. The entrance is less than five feet high and is closed by a millstone sixty inches in diameter and nine inches thick. It sets in a curved groove. The entirety of the tomb is carved from limestone. The anterior is roughly finished. A thin ledge of rock separates the vestibule from the main sepulcher. The doorway is not high,and the three men have to bend down to enter it.

On the right side of the vestibule is a flat slab of stone for the use of visitors who desire to sit. It is on this stone that the three men lay the body of Jesus. They light tapers,for darkness is approaching,and stick them in the walls. Nicodemus places a feather under Jesus' nose. The feather does not move. He knows that Jesus' soul has left his body.

They now pull the spikes from his hands,and with what loving care they do this. It requires great effort to twist his stiffened arms down and cross them over his chest. At this the three do not look at one another,but keep their heads marosely drawn downward to the task. It is too much to see his beloved Jesus in this sad condition, and young John begans to sob. They send him outside to stay with the women.

The myrrh and aloes is worked into the wounds. Neither speak as they complete the task. They rub in the resin with the ball of their thumb. John returns,sniffing,and as they lift the body of Jesus,he places the shroud of linen beneath him,careful that it is spread smoothly over the stone table. Then the remaining length is lifted up and placed over the front of the body. With small strips of cloth they bind the body at the neck,at the waist,and around the ankles. Then all three of them lift the body and place it on the stone sepulcher,with it facing Jerusalem. They flip back the linen flap and leave his face exposed.

The hurried task is done.

The golden light of the lamps fill the tomb with amber,and the scent of the spices is heavy in the night air. The women are brought in and they stand for a quiet,hushed moment,peering at the solemn face of Jesus who seems asleep,the white linen shroud a decoreous note against his dark skin,his long turbulant hair.

They leave the tomb,their shadows flung eerily against the dark stone walls. Young John remains. He stands quietly and looks at Jesus a long heart-felt look. He puts out the tapers. The dark cave like room springs into utter blackness.

He joins the others,and,with Joseph and Nicodemus,moves the huge millstone into place.

John goes to Mary,puts his arm around her,and tells her it is time for them to be starting for home. Mary smiles at her new son. They go by way of Golgotha,stand and stare for a moment at the three upright beams,at the thieves not yet dead,then cross the level stretch of wild flowers and into the gates of the Holy City.

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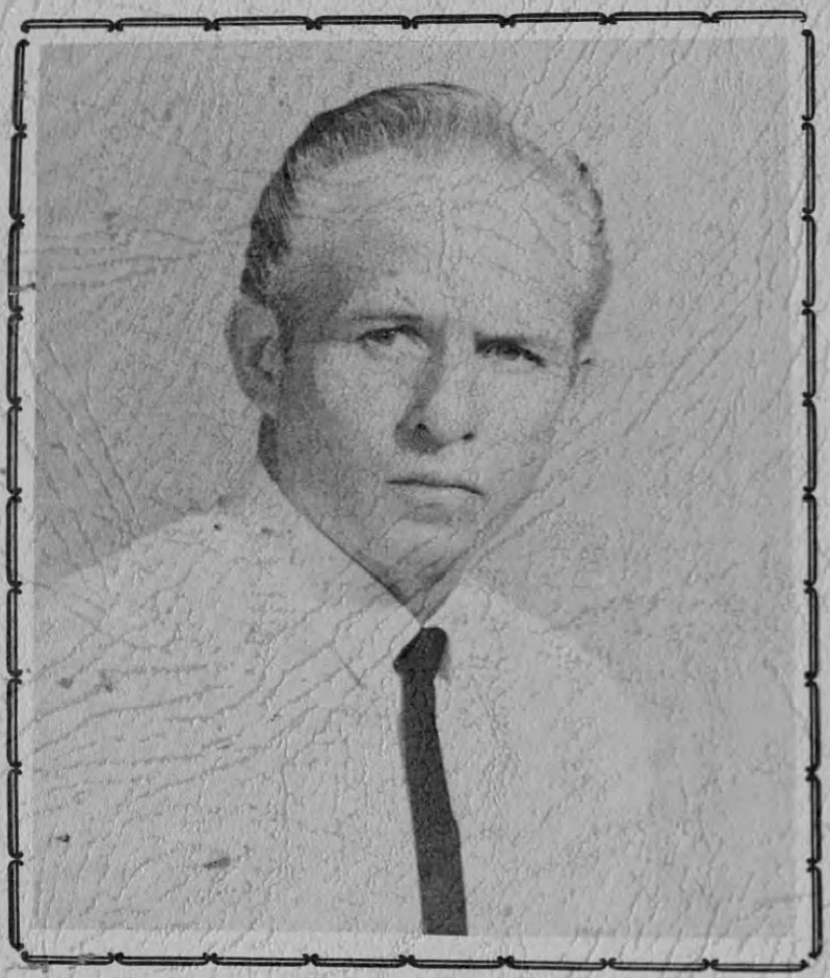
Arisen

Can one not hear these wonderfully devoted women telling Luke of their memories,so dear to them,which must have been positively embalmed on their minds,as they crossed Golgotha that glorious day, their arms loaded with spices and ointments they had prepared for the anointment,and had found the stone parted,the tomb empty.

And how John and Peter appeared later,John being young and running in first,and stooping down sees--the linen cloths lying,and the napkin that had been about Jesus's head,not lying with the linen cloths,but apart,wrapped up into one place.

And how,on leaving the sepulchre,with the shroud held to their heart,they saw how the warm sun covered all the earth.

*****The End*****



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